

Annual Report 1997-98



BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1997/98
TOGETHER WITH A
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 1997

BBFC

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

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20th July 1998

**THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION**

Dear Secretary of State,

I have pleasure in sending you, in accordance with section 6 of the Video Recordings Act 1984 and my letter of designation of 18th February, 1998, the Annual Report of the British Board of Film Classification for 1997-98, together with the statement of accounts for the year ended 31st December 1997.

Yours sincerely,



Andreas Whittam Smith
President

The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
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President
Andreas Whittam Smith
Director
James Ferman

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ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH

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BBFC staff 1997

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION



When I took up my duties as President on 1st January, 1998, I found that I was to work with an impressive team of people. The examiners, whose ages ranged from 33 to 57, equally split between men and women, and most of them parents, come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The quality of their reports, their insightful comments in discussion, their commitment to doing the work as Parliament intended when passing the relevant legislation and their appreciation of the concerns of their fellow citizens are all alike exemplary. Similarly, the Board's administrative staff is wholly focused on making sure that the Board's work is done expeditiously, that proper records are kept and charges for classification levied, and that helpful relations are maintained with the Board's customers, the distributors.

The Board's operations in their entirety are managed by the Director, James Ferman, and the Deputy Director, Margaret Ford. Both have been extremely helpful to me personally, and the excellence of the Board's work is the result of their leadership over a long period. Mr Ferman has announced his retirement after 23 years of doing one of the hardest jobs in public life.

I should also like to express the Board's thanks for the enormous contribution to its work made by Lord Birkett, who was Acting President during 1997, following Lord Harewood's retirement on the grounds of ill health. Many people in the Board, the industry and the Video Consultative Council have spoken to me admiringly of Lord Birkett's work. He served 13 years as a very active Vice President, as did Monica Sims, who has agreed to stay on this year while we recruit her successors. They both deserve our thanks.

The special difficulty of the Board's task, experienced most acutely by the Director, and also, may I say, by the President, is that key classification decisions are always open to sustained and passionate criticism, either from those who would like the Board to use its powers to cut substantially what they see as offensive material or from those who resent what they consider to be the Board's unnecessary interference in their right to view works in the cinema and on video without either cuts or limitations as to age.

When I took up my duties, I gave myself three objectives. To promote consistency in the classification process. To encourage the Board to be as open as possible. To make sure that the Board is well informed about the public's attitude to its work.

In outlining these tasks, I would not like it to be thought that my colleagues have been neglecting them, quite the contrary. But sometimes a newcomer can impart an extra impetus or sharpen the focus and that is what I am endeavouring to do. Thus I asked that the classification procedures should be codified in a form which could easily be understood by anybody who wished to know why a particular decision had been reached. This has now been done and the draft guidelines are published with this report. (Appendix I, BBFC Draft Guidelines) They are being circulated to other media regulators and industry trade associations, while public comment is being canvassed and analysed.

The guidelines will be looked at afresh about once a year. While the basic principles of classification are relatively slow to change, not everything is static. New developments in film-making appear in the cinema. In the video market, the variety of subjects and their treatment grows ever more extensive. An example is the sudden appearance of videos comprising television news pictures which were thought too shocking to be broadcast at the time – scenes from fires, shootings, suicides, riots and the like. The law, too, may alter. When new legislation governing, say, the possession of firearms or combat knives is introduced, the Board has to take notice. There are also gradual shifts in what the public considers to be offensive which the Board must also bear in mind.

The Board is committed to being as open as possible. In the case of the classification decisions reached earlier in 1998 for three controversial works, *Lolita* in the cinema, and *Crash* and *Kissed* for video release, the Board issued a full statement explaining its thinking. (see Appendix II, Press Releases) It will continue to do this. Since I was appointed I have also made numerous broadcasts explaining the Board's work, and given many press interviews. Being more open, however, is a task which never ceases and requires a systematic approach.

In this regard, the Board's recently established web site will be more and more useful. It is capable of becoming a regularly updated notice board containing a great deal of information about our work. Enthusiasts for electronic communication must remind themselves, however, that the proportion of households connected to the Internet remains below 10%, albeit rising sharply. It will thus be necessary for the Board to seize other opportunities to open up channels of communication between itself and the public. Given the Board's good relationship with cinema owners and video retailers, it may be possible to make our work better known at the point of sale. In any case, for some considerable time the Board's examiners have been visiting schools to explain our work and in turn numerous visitors are received at the Board's offices in central London.

If we would like to keep the public as fully informed about our work as possible, it is equally important that we should understand public opinion in all its facets. Our responsibilities are awe-inspiring. We have the power to prevent millions of our fellow citizens from seeing films or videos which they might wish to see; equally, by not fully comprehending the concerns of parents, we could fall short of one of our main duties, which is to help regulate the viewing of their children.

There are many ways in which we can make sure that we are sensitive to public opinion. For instance, between 21st April and 8th June 1998, the Board organised a series of nine public meetings around the country. Venues included Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast, Southampton, Cardiff, Birmingham and London, where three presentations were organised. They were attended by a total of 742 members of the public, including local authority councillors, civil servants, teachers, psychologists, trading standards officers, members of the film and video industries, and representatives of more than thirty church groups, pressure groups and interested parties. We shall do a further round of public meetings in some months' time.

The meetings began at 7.00 pm. The form was a presentation of the guidelines by the Director, James Ferman, illustrated by clips from a variety of films. This lasted about 1½ hours. As part of it, the audience was invited to view extracts from a film and to suggest what the classification issues were and what age limit should be placed on it. The responses varied between 'PG', '12' and '15'. This section of the evening was often punctuated by questions, comments and vigorous debate.

Then at around 8.30 pm to 8.45 pm the meeting was opened up to general discussion which sometimes went on till nearly 10 pm. Questions were answered by a panel comprising three examiners and sometimes the Deputy Director or Principal Examiner. Audiences seemed to

appreciate meeting the examiners, hearing from them and seeing what sort of people undertake such responsibilities. I chaired each meeting, and attendances grew slowly but steadily in response to extensive coverage in the press.

I believe that the value of such meetings lies in their democratic virtues rather than as a way of more accurately reading public opinion. Meetings are open to all-comers; there is dialogue between the public and Board and the comments made by the audience are often more vivid and telling than any written report. The impact upon us has been considerable.

In general the Board's rules seem to be accepted. Concern was expressed that child actors were often having to speak bad language and witness adult behaviour before they were really old enough. Some difficulty is experienced with the Parental Guidance category. We learnt that 'PG' is often wrongly read as equivalent to 'U'. We were repeatedly asked whether we had presided over, or even encouraged, a deterioration in society's moral values. Another group of people complained that the Board paid too much attention to protecting children at the expense of adults being unfairly deprived of material they wanted to see. We are reflecting on all these points.

Keeping in touch with public opinion also means using the conventional monitoring methods – focus groups, public opinion polls and the like. The Board has been doing this for some time. I also intend to keep in touch with those people who articulate what people feel. I refer to lobbying groups, newspapers, and members of both Houses of Parliament.

In fact the House of Lords has twice debated the work of the Board since I took office. On the second occasion, Lord Alton moved a motion that would have given organisations such as children's charities the right, along with industry, to appeal against the Board's decisions. I have sympathy with the nub of the proposal, but I believe that the practical problems it raises, as regards expense and the sheer volume of work, could be great. The amendment was defeated.

However, the Board intends to establish an advisory or consultative panel for the interests of children. Its purpose would be to monitor the work of the Board and to advise it when necessary. I am presently engaged in consulting widely about how such a panel could most effectively be set up.

In conclusion, I would like to repeat part of my reply to a letter from a lady in Belfast who had wondered whether the Board was sufficiently aware of everyday concerns. I quoted the lines from *The Merchant of Venice* – "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?" and added: "we are, all of us, ordinary people, parents or grandparents, equal numbers of men and women, citizens from ethnic communities among us. If we were a hard faced institution, I doubt if we would have arranged a series of public meetings in different parts of the country and invited questions and comments."



Andreas Whittam Smith
President

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Looking back on 1997, from a vantage point of less than a year away, one can see that it was never as controversial a year as it was made out to be in the press. There were problem films, as there always are, but they were soluble problems of the kind we tackle year in, year out at the BBFC. That's what makes the job so interesting and challenging, and that's why I have found it so rewarding for more than 23 years. Over that lengthy perspective, it can be seen that the vilification of a few films every year is in nearly every case disproportionate to the issues. Usually, what it comes down to is questions of taste, and tastes vary, as they must, in a modern, multi-cultural democracy.

At the BBFC, we know that taboo themes, like those of *Crash* and *Lolita*, will engender controversy, but in a free society, which Britain aspires to be, there should be no such thing as a taboo theme, only taboo treatments. In the 1990s, it is rare to encounter a film in which the treatment is wholly irresponsible, but that was not the case when I took over the Board in 1975. The '70s were a decade of exploitation in the cinema. Hollywood had scrapped its Production Code and put nothing in its place but an uncensored 'X' category, which covered not just hardcore sex, but hardcore violence as well. And when these found their markets, it was assumed that their combination would find an even bigger market. It did, and the world rushed to supply that market as cheaply and viciously as possible. Working at the Board then was a struggle against a wave of corrupting material. The major problem was rape and sexual violence, followed closely by torture and mutilation, often of naked women. In Britain, such films were banned by the BBFC or heavily cut. Yet the uncut versions went on to become the 'video nasties' of the '80s. The remedy on film had been censorship, and the law soon made it the remedy on video as well.

That such an approach was acceptable in a free society was a measure of the seriousness of the problem. But times have changed and, by law, governments and public authorities must ensure that any remedy they propose is not disproportionate to the mischief it is designed to cure. The problems of today are of a lesser order of magnitude than those of the '70s, and the Board's approach must reflect that difference.

During my time at the BBFC, we have respected film as an art form, perhaps the greatest art form of the 20th century, with a unique capacity for exploring the world and the human soul. No regulator has the right to muzzle such a medium or to block off avenues of exploration, and therefore no subject matter should any longer be taboo. Yet in the past 23 years, we have taken the view that the more sensitive the theme being tackled, the more responsible the treatment should be. And where the treatment is irresponsible, it is our job to make it responsible before the film is released.

Even libertarians accept that in media law a line must be drawn somewhere. For most people, the line begins with child pornography. Under British law, child pornography is illegal, as it is in most civilised countries, but Britain goes further, since it also bans indecent photographs of children which stop short of pornography. At the Board, we go further still, since we apply the test of "harm to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society." It is an effective test and one we had been applying for nearly twenty years, so we were pleased when in 1994 it became part of the Video Recordings Act. The suggestion to put it on the face of the Act was that of the then Opposition Spokesman on Home Affairs, Tony Blair. It was an inspired suggestion because it was so reasonable, and it united a House of Commons that was deeply divided over a motion to introduce the harshest censorship for video of any country in the western world.

The test of the Board's legitimacy is that our decisions, too, should be reasonable. However disturbing the subject matter of a film, however objectionable the treatment, we must approach its classification objectively. We apply the test of harm, and apply it rigorously, which can result in cuts, but when the treatment is responsible, as it was in the case of *Lolita*, we must respect the freedom of adults to make their own decisions.



Over the years, we have had some bad moments. In 1976, my first full year at the Board, I was shocked to find that 58 of the 402 films we examined contained rape scenes, all but two of which were rape as entertainment. A year later, we led the campaign on behalf of the local authorities and the film industry to have films brought within the scope of the Obscene Publications Act. This meant that every film must be considered as a whole, that artistic merit could be argued in defence, and that the test of criminality was no longer offensiveness but harm to the morality of a significant proportion of the likely audience. The deprave and corrupt test could have been conceived to hold the line against the exploitation of sexual violence. It might also have been framed to provide the ideal weapon against the video nasties of the '80s, where it proved its effectiveness repeatedly. The battle against rape and sexual violence was largely won by the end of the '70s, but we took our campaign into the international arena in 1982 at the first of four world conferences organised by the Board. By introducing the community of film censors to the findings of the international research community, we sharpened the awareness of the regulators and led them, too, to draw the same line we had drawn against porno rape and sexual assault. That this coincided with pressure from the women's movement also played a part, since women were no longer prepared to tolerate the rape myths being propagated on film, that women enjoy being victimised, that rape is a gift conferred on women by men. The spectacle of rape as entertainment is no longer acceptable in the west. Where it does survive is in the orient, particularly in Japan and Hong Kong, and since Asian videos are now travelling the world, it is a battle that must be won.

In the cinema, classification and censorship were based on consent. Distributors understood that the rights of adults must be balanced against the needs of children, that greater freedom on the screen might come only at the price of greater restrictions on audience age at the box office. It was a bargain that film companies were prepared to strike, and on the whole it worked. But could it ever work on video, where there was no gatekeeper at the box office and no watchdog in the home? The BBFC was given the responsibility for video classification in 1985, and in three years succeeded in clearing the video nasties off the shelves, if not off the display counters of market stalls and car boot sales. We extended the powers of enforcement from police to trading standards officers and achieved the most effective legal sanctions in the world. We also introduced a video packaging review scheme on a voluntary basis, which transformed the atmosphere in video shops, with the result that Britain now has the most profitable video industry in Europe. We kept the lid on violence partly by making it clear where the Board would draw the line, thus discouraging distributors from importing the kind of videos likely to be banned. And when high-tech violence escalated in the '90s, we ensured that those levels of violence did not reach the teenage market on video.

As the perspective of 23 years recedes, it is the long-term trends that assume significance, but even these can spring surprises. The problem of Hollywood violence which once seemed so daunting has suddenly begun to diminish as the macho superstars take on their real enemy, middle-aged flab. Just as research identified them as dangerous role models, so these musclemen have been

Film Statistics
1970-1997

Year	Total films	Number cut	% cut
1970	502	(166)	33%
1971	502	(165)	33%
1972	488	(179)	37%
1973	504	(201)	40%
1974	540	(218)	40%
1975	424	(147)	35%
1976	402	(135)	37%
1977	375	(105)	28%
1978	324	(74)	23%
1979	331	(81)	25%
1980	319	(67)	21%
1981	278	(59)	21%
1982	326	(79)	24%
1983	390	(105)	27%
1984	376	(72)	19%
1985	351	(67)	19%
1986	348	(44)	13%
1987	330	(38)	11%
1988	337	(48)	14%
1989	369	(60)	16%
1990	396	(43)	11%
1991	341	(45)	13%
1992	319	(28)	9%
1993	350	(38)	11%
1994	374	(21)	6%
1995	364	(27)	7%
1996	364	(21)	6%
1997	382	(15)	4%

overtaken by a sensitive and versatile generation of younger actors. In 1997-98, few major films have featured the triumph of brute force. And who would have predicted the international triumph of *Romeo and Juliet*, blank verse and all?

Meanwhile, the BBFC has truly become a Board of classification rather than censorship, with cut films declining from 40% of the total in 1974 to just under 4% in 1997/98. On video, cuts are averaging 7% of the total, reflecting the stricter standards for viewing in the home.

Where we have failed is in producing a sensible system of regulation for the sex industry, which has left the cinema altogether for the more appropriate medium of home video. Public tolerance of sex on screen has increased, and explicit sex education tapes now cause little comment on the shelves of W.H. Smith's. In 1978, the Church of England Board for Social Responsibility proposed to the Williams Committee that sex films be divided into three types, erotica, pornography and obscenity. Erotica, which "reflects and celebrates the sexual nature of men and women," would be allowed for adults, while obscenity, which degrades persons and relations between them by mixing sex with violence, would be prohibited. But what is interesting is that pornography, which features non-violent sex between consenting adults as an aphrodisiac or sex aid, would be permitted, but with restricted access. From this flowed the concept of licensed sex shops, but, unfortunately, the law has been applied by police and magistrates in too strict a manner to allow the material the customers want. Thus we are left with a flourishing black market which mixes pornography with obscenity, which is not conducive to a healthy society. As we enter a new millennium, we must find a solution to the problem of pornography, which will not go away.

For all the problems which arose from time to time, I have had a fascinating time at the Board, and worked with some wonderful colleagues. Above all, I owe more than I can say to Lord Harlech, the President who took me on. David Harlech passed on everything he knew, inspired me with the confidence to operate on the public stage and gave me the skills to be effective. Above all, he taught me the ideals of public service which motivated him until he died so tragically in a car crash in 1985. I was fortunate to find a team of successors who shared his standards of public service, Lord Harewood, Lord Birkett, Monica Sims, and now Andreas Whittam Smith. Over the 23 years, I have had two excellent deputies, Ken Penry and Margaret Ford, and an outstanding team of professional staff, not just as examiners, but as administrative and technical support. We take it for granted at the BBFC that only excellence will do, and most of the time, we manage to achieve it. We couldn't do so without the support of the Council of Management, and I owe much to the leadership of David Samuelson and now Dennis Kimbley. Finally, I have been incredibly lucky to have my private office run by two very special and gifted women, Claudia Meldon and Xandra Barry, whose appetite for hard work never ceased to amaze me. Their pride in their work has always been the equal of mine, and I am very proud indeed to have been able to create such a centre of excellence.

Finally, I must give thanks for the memory of so many wonderful films, films which have enriched my life and will stay with me always.



James Ferman
Director

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

If the story of classification in the early '90s has been the struggle to contain the violence of Hollywood's action heroes, then the good news in 1997-98 has been the apparent stemming of that tide. The commercial decline of Hollywood's action blockbusters may signal a change of taste in audiences, both in America and internationally, or it may simply be the onset of middle age in the macho superstars whose fans have begun looking elsewhere. Whatever the explanation, it is a welcome relief.

When in 1996, Arnold Schwarzenegger appeared in *Eraser*, his most savagely violent film in a decade, it seemed to bode ill for the future of cinematic slaughter. Yet *Eraser* flopped in the UK cinema, and, like Steven Seagal's brutal *Under Siege II*, it was heavily cut for video, where it was far more successful and less violent. Indeed, having achieved a '15' rather than an '18', *Eraser* became the 7th most popular video in Britain in 1997, despite some complaints at its relative tameness from those who had relished the original film. No Hollywood action film since *Eraser* has aspired to the same grim level of brutality.

There are omens for the future in the invasion of Hollywood by Hong Kong's virtuosos of balletic mayhem, John Woo and Ringo Lam, who bring with them a style of frenetic violence that owes more to stuntwork than sadism. Along with the film makers came the two top action stars of the East, Jackie Chan and Chow Yun-Fat, whose physical grace evokes the Peking Circus rather than muscle men like Schwarzenegger and Stallone. The techniques they flaunt run the risk of imitability, like the use of butterfly knives in John Woo's fantastical *Face/Off*, or the dare-devil escape artistry of Jackie Chan when ducking flying glass from bottles smashed with a bat in *Rumble in the Bronx*, a scene which had to be cut to retain the '15' category on video.

A modern-dress version of *Romeo and Juliet* featured rival gangs from rival crime families, with the use of guns instead of rapiers bringing tragedy and blank verse vividly to life for today's young Romeos and Juliets. The contemporary treatment of drugs and teenage suicide gave rise to some debate, but it made the original text both sexy and accessible. At the same time, the '12' certificate was a boon for teachers of Shakespeare, since teenagers were studying the text across the land, and here for once was a moral tale in which violence had no positive reward.

Protection of children is one of the cardinal principles of the Board's work, and test screenings are a means of finding out whether the Board's assessment of a film's fear-inducing capacity is in line with the sensibilities of real children. Of course, one must not put children at risk, and the Board always arranges test screenings through Film Education, an organisation of media studies teachers who understand the needs of children. Two films of 1997 cried out for their help. *The Lost World - Jurassic Park* offered children another chance to indulge their fascination with dinosaurs. However, like its predecessor, it contained some scary scenes that tested the limits of acceptability for 'PG', and examiners were divided about the advisability of passing it in this category. After a test screening for children of 9 and over, at which it was enthusiastically received, we decided we could ask younger children what they thought. Our second audience of 6-to-9-year-olds voted overwhelmingly for 'PG', as did their teachers. Only 10% of the 478 children found the film 'too frightening for me', and these were not necessarily the youngest, but the Board decided to acknowledge their fears through a warning on posters and publicity: *Passed 'PG' (Parental Guidance) for scary scenes of violence that may be unsuitable for sensitive children or those under 8.* A similar warning appeared on the video packaging, and it was reassuring to find that there were no complaints that pre-teenage children were disturbed or troubled by the film.

A more realistic setting for violence was in the children's video *First Kid*, about the American President's spoiled young son who, in the final scene, is unwittingly lured away from the White House to a shopping mall to meet a psychotic ex-employee with a gun. The film ends with a lengthy shoot-out in which the lives of other shoppers are endangered as well as the boy. The dilemma for the Board was a familiar one. The film was clearly addressed to children, and yet the nature of the one scene of violence and the lengthy, detailed and sadistic way it was treated took it far beyond the standard we thought appropriate for children. Cuts were instituted to remove the most violent elements, and the result was tested on classes of 6-to-12-year-olds. Like *The Lost World*, the video was enthusiastically endorsed by an audience of children and teachers.

While concern about the levels of violence seen by children continues to be paramount in the junior categories, examiners also debated the levels of visual and verbal references to sex which were acceptable. Discussion of sexual matters has been much more open since the AIDS crisis, when the need to prevent disease overcame much of the traditional British reticence about discussing sex. Although Britain has always tolerated the seaside vulgarity of sexual jokes, as the TV success of *Carry On* films at family viewing times testifies, there is a persistent desire to protect children from too much knowledge too soon, and decisions on suitability have to be based on questions of context and degree. *The Fifth Element*, a sci-fi blockbuster, contained both sexual references and discreet visual indicators of sex and was the subject of much debate. Our decision to pass 'PG' uncut was confirmed at a test screening where children registered enjoyment of the story and spectacle, while parents enjoyed the film on their own level and expressed no significant concerns. Testing films in this way gives us guidance from the public, but can never make the decision for us. That is our responsibility alone.

Predictably the most popular film of the year was *Titanic*, chosen for the Royal Film Performance. Although the subject matter has universal interest, being one of the best known tragedies in maritime history, the category decision of '12' rested on the strong feelings of terror the film generated and the human cost as frozen bodies floated in the water. Some non-sexual nudity in a life-drawing scene and a very discreet sex scene seemed mild by comparison.

The new James Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, followed the pattern of the recent Bonds of being slightly too violent for its intended audience. The early films in the genre had created an audience at junior levels and all the Roger Moore vehicles were passed 'PG'. Then, in an effort to compete with Hollywood's action adventures, far higher levels of violence were injected into the second Timothy Dalton movie, which had to be cut quite heavily for the British '15'. When Pierce Brosnan took over the role, the tongue-in-cheek approach returned, and '12' was established as the target category. As a consequence, the Board's advice was required throughout the editing to ensure that the film did not exceed '12' standards. Cuts in violence were suggested at several stages, particularly in the soundtrack, which exaggerated the strength of every blow and kung-fu kick. When it opened in the cinema, the Board considered that, on grounds of violence, the film had just scraped through as a '12', yet to our surprise, the British public, for all their reported concern about screen violence, lapped it up, content to treat James Bond as fantasy violence, which is a tribute to Brosnan's light touch. The producers were alerted to the probability that, if '12' were to remain the target category on video, the film might need further cuts in violence, since the Video Recordings Act laid down the need to assess the likelihood of underage viewing, which in this case was a virtual certainty. Once again, therefore, the violent soundtrack was moderated, and two cuts were made to remove the brief use of a metal throwing star and a sadistic kick to the face of a recumbent man, both of which had already been trimmed on film.

The stricter guidelines which the law lays down for viewing in the home can result in higher categories on video than on film, although distributors are free to cut if they prefer to maintain the lower category. *Sleepers*, *Ransom* and *Con Air*, had all had something to offer teenagers of '15'

and over in the cinema where entry is regulated at the box office, but on video, where viewing is less controlled and younger, unsupervised children may be present in the room, a stricter view was taken and each of these videos was passed '18'. When the Board cuts violence or raises the category, it does so for two reasons, to protect children from fear or distress, and to avoid teaching them that violence is the preferred solution to human problems.

We also, sadly, need to protect children from adults, since some adults have latent desires which can become a menace to children. Thus the Board examines every film or video which deals with paedophilia very carefully in case it may trigger such responses. A gruelling two-part account of the abuse of boys in a Newfoundland orphanage seemed, in the light of heightened awareness of child abuse, to contain eroticised images of young boys in a changing room, and cuts were made to remove these before passing the work on video.

Another drama about incest needed substantial cuts in scenes that offered a model of transgressive behaviour, including dialogue that might be used to groom a child for sex. Cuts included the techniques used by a father to seduce his infant daughter and his brutalising of the girl throughout her childhood and adolescence. Similar cuts were made in all videos where the theme of child abuse was treated without due regard for the vulnerability of victims. Worst of all was a soft-porn video which set up the scenario of innocent 'schoolgirls' being corrupted by their female 'teacher'. The performers were clearly mature adults, but the dialogue constituted a model of the language a paedophile might use in the illicit persuasion of children. All such dialogue was removed, and a new scenario substituted.

This issue dominated our thinking towards the end of the year when the new version of *Lolita* was submitted. No decision was taken in 1997, although it was seen by all examiners and management and the issues debated very fully. But the final decision could not be taken until the arrival of the Board's new President, Andreas Whittam Smith, who took up his post in January. He saw the film several times, as many others of us had, and arranged consultations with police officers specialising in paedophilia as well as two distinguished child psychiatrists, one of whom runs a clinic for the victims of paedophilia and another for the perpetrators. The Board's legal advisers were consulted as well as a distinguished QC. They agreed that the subject had been treated responsibly and that the film would not offend against any test of British law. It contained no indecent photograph of the 14-year-old actress who played Lolita; indeed the film-makers had played safe by using a 19-year-old body-double for any scenes of a sexual nature. The psychiatrists agreed with our lawyers that the film was unlikely to encourage paedophile behaviour or put children at risk. The protection of children is not the only principle of classification. Another is the principle that adults should be free to decide for themselves what film or video they want to see, provided it remains within the law and does not encourage harm to others. In the Board's view, *Lolita* was a challenging and compassionate treatment of an established literary classic which adult cinemagoers had a right to judge for themselves. It was classified '18.' (see Appendix II, Press Releases).

Also challenging the principle of freedom of expression for adults was the film that dominated the headlines during 1997, David Cronenberg's *Crash*. Its classification for the cinema had to be agreed in an atmosphere of intense pressure to reject the film, not only from newspapers, but also from readers of those papers, alarmed at the supposed content. This was not a new experience for the Board and, while we wish complainants would see a film themselves before rushing to judgment, we acknowledge that certain subjects arouse strong feelings. What was new about this campaign, however, was the harassment and intrusion into their private lives of the Board's examiners, who were attacked by one tabloid newspaper as if they had been responsible for making the film rather than merely attempting to assess it calmly and rationally in the public interest. After the film was

released, the fuss died down, audiences realising perhaps that it was a serious attempt to examine the price of deviant behaviour, rather than the prurient and voyeuristic portrayal it was made out to be by the press.

Several videos during the year presented alternative lifestyles, particularly those that are on the edge of what is usually considered normal behaviour, and the Board's debate was about how far the images portrayed were acceptable on video at '18'. A video about the fashion for risk-taking amongst young people showed extreme shots of body-piercing and the mutilation of skin that were judged to be too detailed and lengthy for distribution without cuts. Yet another video portrayed, in semi-documentary style, the lives of homosexual prostitutes in California. Some extreme examples of sado-masochistic practice were shown and were subject to cuts to reduce the process of explicit injury. The establishment of acceptable levels for such material must rest on the principle that, consenting or not, the infliction of serious injury on others is a criminal offence.

The use of hidden cameras to provide voyeuristic footage for 'infotainment' raised issues of privacy and breach of confidence in an area which is likely to assume even greater importance after the incorporation into British law of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees both the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression. 'Peeping Tom' videos have been classified in the recent past, but the development of privacy law in Britain led the Board to refuse a certificate to a video of that sort in order to test the relative importance of the competing rights of privacy and freedom of expression. This decision has been referred to the Video Appeals Committee and will be heard in 1998.

Rejects during the year under review were all centred on the issue of violence. One, in the guise of a sporting documentary about karate, was actually selling the pleasures of gross violence through its unrelenting focus on the infliction of injury and pain. Another, which purported to be a documentary about the S.A.S., was selling the glamour and excitement of handguns as well as detailed instructions in their use. Two different versions of the same Hong Kong thriller were rejected for their exploitative treatment of rape, murder and dismemberment. A sado-masochistic video was rejected for its pornographic treatment of sex in a context of force, restraint and the infliction of pain. The Board's rejection of the video game *Carmageddon* was referred to the Video Appeals Committee, where, on a split decision, the appeal was granted.

Several policy issues were considered in depth by groups of examiners, leading to a full debate by examiners and management. Over several weeks examiners investigated the standards appropriate for children's films in the 'U' category, using the Board's Home Viewing Panel to assess parental expectations, and inviting a focus group of parents to watch a film and discuss the issues it raised. Other issues considered were (1) the intensity of some TV drama serials when submitted without a break on video, (2) the proper balance between freedom and youth protection when classifying documentaries of social or historical importance that deal with real-life atrocities, and (3) the question of taste and decency in relation to the sexual material used by stand-up comics. The power of words to cause offense is a perennial problem.

Sex itself is rarely a major issue these days. There is more sex on TV and in mainstream cinema than ever before, yet there are few complaints. At '18', no cinema film has been cut for sex content for ten years. Yet one of the main issues bedevilling video classification since the Act came into force in 1985 has been the proper use of the 'R18' category for licensed sex shops. In 1997 this issue came to a head in a debate which involved obscenity law and the question of how a free society should handle non-violent pornography.

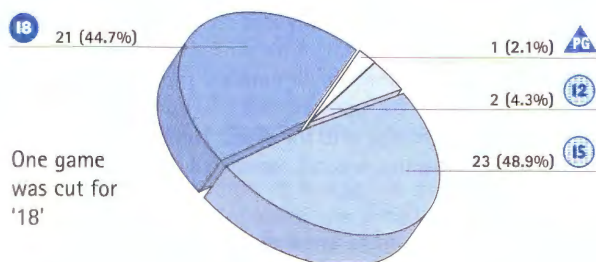
All these topics are developed more fully in the main body of the report.

Digital Media

There was a significant decline in the number of leisure software works (digital media) submitted during 1997 in comparison to those received in the previous year, and by December, 47 of the 55 works submitted had received classification certificates. It is still unclear why this drop in throughput should have occurred, but a combination of factors seems to have had an impact, beginning with consumer fatigue with the prevalence of single-approach action games. Interestingly, there also seems to have been greater caution on the part of manufacturers anxious to tone down some of the more violent games which were bringing the industry into disrepute. And finally, with public interest being diverted to the Internet, there has been some impact on the type and volume of digital media requiring classification.

Classification decisions on works submitted during 1997 are set out below:

Digital Media: 47



Although cuts were considered for several of the marginal decisions, only one horror/adventure game, *Phantasmagoria 2*, was ultimately cut as a condition of certification at '18'. As mentioned in last year's Annual Report, this game featured full-motion video (FMV) with live actors, and heavy cuts were needed to reduce a realistic scene in which a dominatrix is chained to a beam, slit with a knife and electrocuted. Cuts were also required to remove shots of a hand pinned by a blade and a throat being slashed.

The problem with games is that classification at '18' has proved relatively ineffective in keeping them away from younger games players. This was one of the grounds for the Board's refusal of a certificate to *Carmageddon*, a car racing game in which points were awarded for the hit-and-run killing of innocent pedestrians. The development company appealed, and, by a majority of 3 to 2, the Video Appeals Committee granted the appeal on the grounds that an '18' certificate was likely to be far more effective than the Board believed, particularly with a game that could only be played on a PC. In consequence of this split decision, the game was granted an '18' certificate. The reasons for the Board's rejection of *Carmageddon* were set out in its Reply to the Notice of Appeal, and that document was included as an Appendix to last year's Annual Report. The written decision of the Appeals Committee was not available at the time of publication, but the judgment is given in full as one of this year's Appendices (Appendix IV, *Carmageddon* decision).

While the *Carmageddon* decision was pending, two other games hit the headlines, *Grand Theft Auto* and *Postal*. Both these submissions were put on hold until the *Carmageddon* appeal was decided, but once that precedent had been set, there seemed little justification for erring on the side of caution with other games. Unlike *Carmageddon*, neither *Grand Theft Auto* nor *Postal* afforded a first-person perspective for the player, nor did either game involve the deliberate, cold-blooded killing of innocent figures.

Grand Theft Auto was like a digital Cops and Robbers in which the player takes on the role of a minor criminal engaged by various crime gangs to steal cars and deliver them to rendezvous points in exchange for 'money'. However, as the player advances through the game, the missions become increasingly complex, including gangland shootouts, bribery and assassinations. Our immediate concern was that the game might include criminal techniques which could be useful in the commission of real-life offences. However, the layout of the game was reassuring, as all the action is presented from a bird's-eye perspective as if the player were observing from a helicopter perched directly above the city streets. The game play takes place on the roads and alleyways of fictitious urban America and features small, cartoon-like blobs representing vehicles or people moving about as if on a map. There is nothing remotely lifelike about the figures; nor do the orders of the gang boss add up to practical instructions in crime, since the emphasis is on the completion of the mission within a time limit without being 'busted' by the police or killed by rival crooks. Obviously, the thrill of being a 'virtual delinquent' is part of the appeal, and concern that criminal activity could be found exciting led us to pass the game '18' rather than '15'.

In *Postal* as in *Grand Theft Auto*, the scenario about a lone gunman was more worrying than its treatment, since here again, the human figures were totally unreal, resembling paintings of toy soldiers as seen from a hilltop. This was a 'shoot-em-up' clearly inspired by any number of films based on the idea of an embattled urban 'commando' shooting it out with a bunch of 'hostiles' and fleeing for his life from one perilous environment to another. In America, the game had included episodes of crazed irresponsibility on the part of the gunman, but the British distributor had cautiously removed all these elements before submitting it to the BBFC. Nevertheless, the theme, coupled with sounds of people screaming and groaning, was not considered suitable for non-adult users, and this work was also classified '18'.

As the year ended, the main issue was the increasing trend by games magazine publishers to carry grossly offensive advertisements for some games and to offer free but unclassified 'demo discs' (CD-Roms) attached to the front covers of magazines. These contained playable samples of games classified by the BBFC, but gave no indication of the certificate, which resulted in complaints from parents who found their children accessing games which were inappropriate for their age. Publishers were warned to submit such discs for classification if they were not to risk prosecution. The practical solution would be for magazine publishers not to include classified games on such discs, but this would restrict manufacturers from advertising their product, the free demo disc being the most effective way of doing so. At present, the trade associations of the leisure software industry are working to bring such activities within the law before they bring the entire industry into disrepute.

ENFORCEMENT

Provision of evidence for police and trading standards officers fell during 1997 for the first time since the amendments of 1993/94 introduced streamlined enforcement procedures. Even cases requiring evidence by title alone declined significantly, as indicated by the following figures. Several factors may have contributed. A crackdown on piracy had led to a 60% drop in the piracy market in 1997, thus reducing the need for court proceedings. But an even bigger factor was apparently the constraints on trading standards departments as the new government set new priorities based on the urgency of enforcing public health standards on the production and handling of food. An unintended consequence of this may have been a reduction in the enforcement of the Video Recordings Act.

Cumulative statistics of enforcements of the Video Recordings Act showing the increase in enforcement after the amendments of 1994 and the decline of enforcement in 1997–98.

Year	Inquires	Cases	Titles
1992	192	234	1,592
1993	245	351	2,167
1995	396	485	8,210
1994	439	606	9,598
1996	332	425	9,893
1997	282	329	7,049
1998	111	141	2,663 (6 months only)

RESEARCH

Since 1976, the BBFC has been actively engaged in media research, promoting seminars and conferences to consider the work of leading academics from around the world, and sponsoring new research into public attitudes and media effects. In the '90s, the issue of screen violence has dominated the debate in every continent, and the Board convened a working group of research directors from all the media regulators in Britain to develop a programme of research into the links, if any, between screen violence and real-life violence.

The same consortium sponsored a series of modules on media standards in the British Social Attitudes Survey, the first of which was in 1996, when the Survey reported on sex. It revealed a significant relaxation in public concern over depictions of sex in the cinema, video and TV. In 1997, it did a comparable survey into violence, where tolerance was clearly at a lower level than towards the portrayal of sex. The greatest strictness was reserved for 'gratuitous violence', which was felt not to be necessary for the plot, while the greatest tolerance was for violence which was part of a television news bulletin. As with sex scenes, attitudes became stricter with age. They also became stricter with the accessibility of the medium. Thus people were least restrictive about media which had limited access, like the cinema, and to a lesser extent video, and most restrictive about widely accessible media like the regular television channels and radio. Cable and satellite channels fell somewhere in between. Violence in close-up was more worrying than violence at a distance, and fantasy violence more acceptable than realistic violence. Young men tended to be more permissive about violence, while young women had been shown to be more tolerant of sex. In particular, most people saw acts of violence as inherently wrong, whereas many (though not all) saw sex as natural and acceptable. Above all, objections to scenes of violence tended to be based on the assumption that watching violence might have adverse behavioural consequences.

The other strand of BBFC research was the study of those behavioural consequences in the form of links between screen violence and real violence. This investigation was initially co-funded by the BBFC, the BBC, the Independent Television Commission, and the Broadcasting Standards Council (now Commission). The first stage was a detailed study of the tastes and viewing habits of young offenders, matched against a wider sample of non-offenders. Results suggested that both groups were watching very much the same films, videos and TV programmes, with a strong preference for macho heroics across both samples of young males. The BBFC suggested that the differences between the social behaviour and backgrounds of the two groups might mean that they were interpreting the same material very differently, and this became the basis of the second stage of the research, which was undertaken by Dr (now Professor) Kevin Browne of Birmingham University. This stage was funded by the Home Office and was concluded towards the end of 1997.

Dr Browne had been granted access to young offenders in custody in order to test the hypothesis that offenders with a violent background were more likely to be influenced by violent films and videos than non-offenders. The results largely confirmed the hypothesis, revealing significant differences between the two groups, with violent offenders showing a far greater preference for violent films than had been shown by the first study. They also revealed a greater tendency to identify with violent role models, which was strongly reinforced if they came from violent or disturbed backgrounds. And they had a far greater predisposition towards aggression and anti-social behaviour, compounded by an inability to empathise with the victims. Dr Browne concluded that viewing violent films can reinforce distorted perceptions about the usefulness of violence in resolving conflict and responding to provocation, especially in those already predisposed to aggressive behaviour. This confirms American research which indicated that frequent exposure to media violence was not by itself predictive of criminal behaviour, but that the interaction of media violence and family violence was a more reliable predictor. What seems to happen is that children who are the victims of parental violence before the age of five have those lessons reinforced later on in childhood by the frequent watching of violent films and television.

Still to be published are the results of the team's direct observation of the behavioural reactions of offenders as they watch a violent film, reactions which will be matched with the on-screen violence which provoked it. Dr Browne points out that this research was not designed to prove that media violence causes crime. What it shows is that when factors like growing up in a violent family and developing an aggressive personality are present in an individual, a liking for violent films can identify those who go on to commit violent offences. No firm conclusions can be drawn without following up the future offending behaviour of the participants, and it will require further research to clarify the mechanisms by which media violence may reinforce distorted attitudes and trigger anti-social behaviour. For the moment, research indicates that the key role is played by the family, which is the starting place for offending behaviour. This in turn leads to a preference for screen violence, which validates the family pattern, and so the cycle continues. Dr Browne suggests that in order to reduce the influence of screen violence we should start with the problem of family violence. We should also promote the teaching of critical viewing skills to enable damaged children and their families to understand that real violence is neither glamorous nor cost-free. This confirms the importance of media education in the fight against crime.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

1997 was a year of initiative and development. In January, the BBFC Consumer Advice scheme which had been piloted by Polygram Video for two and a half years was adopted by the whole of the mainstream video industry. The scheme offers impartial information on the issues that determined the classification decision and appears on the back covers of nearly all new rental and sell-through videos. The explanations the Board gives for its decisions have been generally welcomed, more than two-thirds of parents in a recent industry survey having found the information 'very useful'. After consultation with the film industry, a scheme to give similar information to cinema-goers was agreed and the first panel offering advice to parents appeared on posters and publicity material for *The Lost World - Jurassic Park*.

Video customers were given the chance to make their views known to the Board when specially designed postcards were put on display in two of the largest chains of video outlets. Respondents were asked for comments about the certificates given to videos they or their family had watched recently, as well as comments about classification in general. After tackling the rental market, we were able, again with the cooperation of the industry, to ask for comments from the retail market. A large mail order company carried an article about the Board in its monthly magazine, reproducing the postcard and soliciting the views of their readers. In both these initiatives, the responses were to 'open' questions, so it was not possible to quantify the replies, but there was an interesting difference between the two sectors. Postcard responses were more or less balanced, half thinking the Board too restrictive and the other half too lenient, with complaints about leniency citing bad language and violence. Magazine respondents, on the other hand, were predominantly male, outnumbering women by three to one, and by a large margin took the view that there was too much censorship in Britain. Scientific studies have shown that men are likely to favour less censorship than women, which this survey would seem to bear out.

International Links

The Board's dialogue with other regulators continued during the year, as examiners and senior staff attended a number of conferences and seminars in Britain and abroad. Once again, the BBFC hosted a major international conference, the 1997 European Conference of Multi-media Regulators, at which film and video classifiers and TV regulators discussed common problems. (see Appendix V, Programme for European Conference) Dominating the conference was the issue of screen violence, and it was interesting to see how our continental colleagues applied their own remedies, since there is great cultural divergence between European countries in these matters. Television regulators seemed the most beleaguered and subject to the greatest criticism for channelling too much violence into the home. Protection of youth was high on the agenda, as was the question of intervention by setting limits to violent content or restricting it to specialised channels. Surprisingly, pornography proved far less contentious, most European regulators having come to terms with the existence of fairly explicit depictions of sex on encrypted television services transmitted on cable or satellite. There was discussion of new digital delivery systems, including the Internet, and the extent to which labelling of videos and television programmes with Consumer Advice or warning symbols might assist parents. The V-chip was discussed, and the usefulness of filtering out the pornographic treatment of sexual violence. There was unanimity about the importance of media education for children and parents if they were to learn to live in a media-saturated society. Not for the first time, there was general agreement that European harmonisation of media standards was a long way off, but that there might be the possibility of developing common criteria or a common category system. Two British MEPs had been invited to the Conference and urged the delegates to share their expertise with the European Parliament and the European Commission. It was agreed that the 1998 meeting should take place in Brussels with this objective in mind.

Media Education

The Board's commitment to children and young people goes beyond the restriction of potentially harmful material. Since 1994, a more positive approach has been developed through a BBFC educational programme which aims to give young people the knowledge and tools to explore and deepen their understanding of censorship issues, thus helping to create a more informed and aware generation of parents in the future. The educational programme also gives the Board access to the opinions of young people, a group seldom involved in public debate. One of the groups least often heard, apart from BBFC test screenings, is children of primary school age, so we were pleased that one of our examiners was invited to write a bi-monthly column about classification in a London-wide magazine for primary schools.

Every year, the BBFC participates in a range of educational visits – primary and secondary schools, Sixth Form and FE colleges, and universities. In all, thirty-eight educational presentations were mounted outside the Board in 1997, while the monthly in-house student seminars continued, introducing the work of the Board to small, wide-ranging groups of students at our premises in Soho Square. One examiner combined two presentations in a primary school, an evening talk to parents, teachers and governors and a talk next morning to 10/11-year-olds. The issue of regulation appears in all the major GCSE and A-level syllabuses, and is also relevant to vocational courses such as GNVQ and BTEC. In some cases, the role of the BBFC in regulating film and video is specifically mentioned under both the 'Audiences' and 'Institutions' sections of the relevant syllabus.

The main event in the Board's educational work was our participation in National Schools' Film Week, the primary aim of which was to focus our educational output and offer large numbers of students the kind of opportunity that had previously been limited to smaller, ad hoc groups. In particular the regional network offered by Film Education, a national organisation of media studies teachers, gave the Board the opportunity to reach groups of young people who would be unlikely to attend student seminars and who had rarely been visited in the past. In 1997, the choice of venues drew on the local connections maintained by examiners, who welcomed the chance to talk to the young people on whose behalf we make classification decisions. This was also an opportunity to respond to questions about the Board's work and, where appropriate, to correct any misunderstanding of particular issues.

The target audience for workshops was 15/18-year-old students, especially those studying media or film studies, for whom this fitted into a syllabus. Screening of a complete film was followed by a practical classification exercise and discussion. Specifically the workshops explored particular classification problems raised by the screened film, e.g. the media violence debate (*Small Faces*, Cardiff/Swansea), depiction of teenage gangs (*Quadrophenia*, Leicester), classifying material adapted from literary works (*Jude*, Southampton), fantasy and sci-fi violence (*The Fifth Element*, Bristol), comedy violence (*Get Shorty*, Cambridge), films that raise racial/social issues (*La Haine*, Liverpool, Plymouth; *Panther*, Birmingham). More detailed follow-up workshops were organised with individual schools.

In total, the BBFC spoke to approximately 1500 students during the week, which inspired a number of follow-up requests from specific schools and colleges. A revised student pack and teacher guide were also developed to support the workshops. Following the success of the week, the BBFC has been given the opportunity to expand its contribution in 1998.

As part of their normal educational activities, examiners also participated in training days for teachers and appeared on panels at large and small conferences with audiences as diverse as the

Round Table in Basingstoke, a regional meeting of the Royal Television Society, fans of Fantastic Films and Horror, and the student section of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The National Curriculum

Media Education was one of the main themes of the Board's non-examining activities, building on initiatives from our own Video Consultative Council, who had campaigned successfully for the inclusion of Media Education in the National Curriculum. Members of the Council strongly supported the Board's educational work, but were disturbed that, even though it was now part of the National Curriculum, media education received so little attention in reports by OFSTED, the inspection body for schools. An independent report commissioned by the Council confirmed this view, and an interview with the Chief Inspector of Schools was requested to discuss the matter further. Later in the year, the Board was asked by the British Film Institute to co-fund, with other regulators, an audit of media education. The aims of the project included an assessment of how schools were interpreting the rather vague requirements of the National Curriculum and whether they thought these requirements were important and appropriate enough to set more rigorous targets. With results expected in 1998, it should be possible to meet the Chief Inspector with firm conclusions and a better informed basis for our own educational work.

Letters from the Public

A continuing aspect of public accountability is replying to letters and phonecalls, which is an important gauge of how well the Board is meeting public expectations. During 1997, 251 letters were received, 80 of which were requests for information from students (who are supplied with a Guide to the Board's work and invited to attend the monthly Student Seminars, which give examiners an opportunity to explain the Board's policy and practice). All complaints receive a full reply, mostly from examiners who shared responsibility for the decision in question.

Every year, there are letters inspired not by what people see, but by what they read. Thus the large postbag about *Crash*, which began in 1996 before the film arrived in Britain and continued into 1997, was prompted by what people had been led to believe they would encounter if they were to see this minority film. People have a right to express concern about a film's reputation, and to avoid seeing it for that reason, but the Board must also respond to complaints from those who fear being denied the right to make up their own minds about a contentious film. Any decision to reject a film for adults must rest on an assessment of its potential for harm rather than offensiveness, and as the Board suspected, there was little protest on that score once *Crash* had opened in the cinema, with only two complaints from anyone who had seen it. Many protests (32) were received about the '15' awarded to the film *The Craft* about teenagers dabbling in the occult. Most of these seemed to have been inspired by a common source, suggesting that the film was both immoral and anti-Christian, and all received a full and careful reply pointing out that, far from encouraging teenagers to dabble in the black arts, the film roundly condemned witchcraft and urged teenagers to take responsibility for their own lives. As the year ended, the cycle began again, with the Board receiving its first plea to ban *Lolita*, but here the concern was less about the film than about the impact it was likely to have on the incidence of paedophilia, itself a major social problem. This concern, too, carried over into the new year and ended when people had a chance to see the film for themselves. The fears were legitimate, but in the Board's view, they were misplaced, and there were no complaints once the film had opened.

Only one film in 1997 received letters in double figures from those who had actually seen it, and here the complaints were about offensiveness rather than harm. The John Cleese comedy *Fierce Creatures* had been classified 'PG', which signals family entertainment, but bad language is a contentious issue in Britain, particularly when combined with sexual innuendo, and it was this

which prompted 14 letters from the public, a lot by Board standards. The problem was that Cleese himself had recommended it on TV as a family comedy, and parents had taken their children along as a party outing. A cut in language had already been made to secure the 'PG', but this was insufficient for parents who found the film embarrassing in an audience of mixed ages. When it was submitted on video, examiners agreed with the complaints, and the category was raised to '12' with the film cut restored.

There were two complaints about the word 'bloody' in the new live-action version of *101 Dalmatians*, and two more about the word 'bleeding' in an old cartoon version of *Pocahontas* which had been revived to compete with the new Disney cartoon. Three writers complained about bad language in *Men in Black*, although two cuts had already been made in language for 'PG'. Single complaints about language were prompted by the films *Brassed Off*, *Dumb & Dumber*, *Ace Ventura - Pet Detective*, *Happy Gilmore*, *Eddie*, *The Great White Hype*, *Courage Under Fire*, and *Romy & Michele's High School Reunion*, the last of which had already been heavily cut to remove offensive language for the '12'. Here again, the cuts were restored on video and the category was raised to '15'.

Crudeness and vulgarity were the subject of complaint in two '12'-rated comedies, *Beavis and Butthead* (four letters) and *The Nutty Professor* (three), while one letter-writer thought the scene in which *Mr Bean* gets his shirt-tail caught in his trouser zip was too suggestive for 'PG'. The popular sci-fi adventure *The Fifth Element* was the subject of three complaints about a scene in which a comic character suggests that he might be involved in oral sex off screen, a meaning which the Board decided was too obscure for children. There were three complaints about sexual innuendo in *Liar, Liar* and one about sexual references in *Hackers*, both at '12'. There was also a complaint about partial nudity in a cabaret scene in *The Associate* ('PG'), a complaint with which most members of the BBFC agreed on reconsideration. Finally, there was a complaint about the classification of the Oscar-winning Czech film *Kolya*, which was passed '12' on the basis of a brief scene in which a child walks into a bedroom where a woman is undressing for sex. The letter-writer felt that this touching film about a child should have been 'PG' so it could be seen by children.

Although violence is the issue most frequently cited as contentious by the press, few films prompted more than a handful of complaints on the subject. In the 'U' category, two letter-writers thought a modern version of *Wind in the Willows* too scary for younger children, while there were two complaints each for revivals of *Star Wars* (too violent) and *The Black Cauldron* (too gory), though both these children's classics had been available at 'U' for many years. The most popular film of 1997, *Men in Black*, drew seven complaints about violence at 'PG', with parents writing to say that their younger children had found it too frightening or horrific. The Board is currently considering adding to the 'PG' warning the phrase "not recommended for children under 8", which would also apply to *Batman & Robin* and *Jane Eyre*, each of which attracted two letters complaining that the one was too graphic and the other too upsetting for 'PG'.

Interestingly, the film where complaints about violence had been most anticipated was *The Lost World - Jurassic Park*. The original film had prompted 44 letters of complaint at 'PG', 41 from adults who thought the film would frighten children, and only three reporting distress caused to an actual child. Test screenings had predicted that the vast majority of children would enjoy this first film, with only a few finding it too frightening, and that in fact was the result. When the sequel came along, we did more extensive test screenings, showing the film to a total of 478 children and their teachers. Overwhelmingly, they voted for 'PG', even the teachers of six-and-seven-year-olds, who said they would never have believed how much their children would enjoy the scary experience if they hadn't seen the evidence for themselves. Despite the warning to parents that accompanied the film, we thought there would be a significant number of letters about its effect on sensitive

children, but in the event, only eight letters were received criticising the 'PG' rating, all of them putting forward adult or teenage anxieties on behalf of younger children, but not one citing the film's distressing effect on an actual pre-teens child.

There were also complaints about the violence in four '12' films, the sci-fi features *Mars Attacks* (two letters) and *The Island of Dr Moreau* (two), the comic-strip horror film *Spawn* (two), and the enormously successful modern-dress version of *Romeo & Juliet* (three letters), which became the most popular Shakespeare adaptation in the history of the cinema. In the '15' category, four correspondents thought that *Sleepers*, Barry Levinson's study of teenage delinquency, was too violent and disturbing for the category, and the Board took the view that the film should be reclassified '18' on video where there would be less control of audience age. Although *Ransom* drew only two protests at '15', here again the Board decided to raise the video category to '18'. Three complainants thought the monster movie *The Relic* was too violent and gory, while one letter each took the view that *Heat*, *Absolute Power* and *Conspiracy Theory* should have been '18'.

On other subjects, there were eight letters questioning the Board's policy of cutting martial arts weaponry and six asking why *The Exorcist* had still not been released on video. Two letters argued that *Independence Day* should have been 'PG' rather than '12' since it was no more scary than *Jurassic Park*, and two mounted the same argument for bringing *Star Trek - First Contact* down from '12' to 'PG'. Two letters protested at the cutting of *Eraser* for video, and one argued that *Scream* should have been '15' rather than '18'. A sprinkling of letters demanded the banning of certain films, among them *Female Perversions*, *Natural Born Killers*, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, *Twin Town*, and *Gummo*, all of which had received adverse comment in the press.

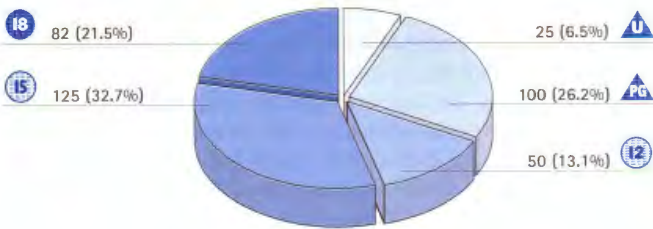
Three correspondents complained that a Boots advertisement showed nudity too frankly for the '12'. One viewer thought there was too much sex in videos in general, but four letter writers thought there was not enough sex on video. There were 39 letters supporting a more liberal policy at 'R18', and eight letters opposing it. One correspondent complained that the tight rubber costumes in *Batman & Robin* were unsuitable for children's viewing. A 10-year-old wrote to complain that the Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* ('12') should have been 'PG' so he could see it, and another young writer pleaded that examiners should include someone under '18' who was "representative of youth". Since examiners may have to classify films as 'unsuitable for persons under 18', this suggestion has not been implemented, but the Board will continue its policy of consulting students of all ages on a regular basis.

Statistics for 1997 are displayed graphically on the following page.

FILM STATISTICS FOR 1997

Features: 382

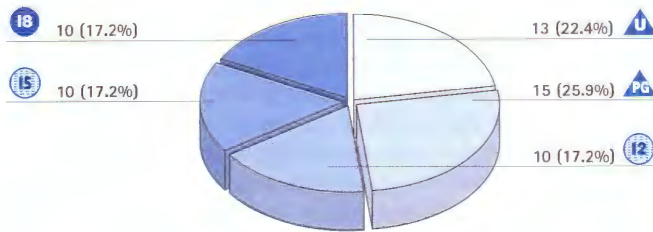
Total Cut: 15 (3.9%)



U	25	0 (0%)
PG	100	5 (5%)
12	50	5 (10%)
15	125	2 (1.6%)
18	82	3 (3.7%)

Shorts: 58

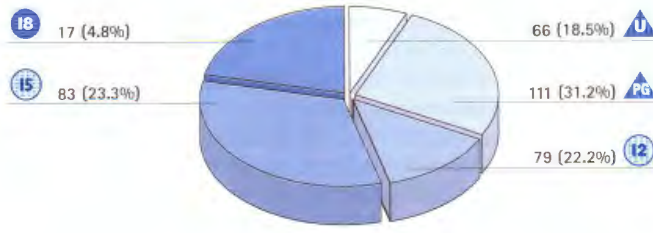
Total Cut: 1 (1.7%)



U	13	1 (7.7%)
PG	15	0 (0%)
12	10	0 (0%)
15	10	0 (0%)
18	10	0 (0%)

Trailers: 356

Total Cut: 18 (5.1%)



U	66	3 (4.5%)
PG	111	6 (5.4%)
12	79	5 (6.3%)
15	83	4 (4.8%)
18	17	0 (0%)

There were 322 cinema advertisements, 274 (85%) of them classified 'U' and 48 (15%) classified

CLASSIFICATION TRENDS

FILMS

1997 was a boom year for cinema in Britain, and it was also marked by the success of British films worldwide, as *The Full Monty*, *Bean* and the new Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, all flourished internationally. Film submissions were higher than in 1996, as audience demand spurred the building of a new generation of multiplex cinemas.

For the second year running, it was good to find that very few films were raising serious classification problems, despite the awful warnings raised by some of the tabloids. Classification figures were again high, with 382 features passed for the cinema, together with 58 shorts, 356 trailers, and 322 advertisements. Again, over 20% of the features were untranslated Asian films intended for Britain's ethnic minorities.

Cuts were required in only 15 features, 3.9% of the total, which was the lowest percentage of films cut in the Board's entire history. Violence on the big screen was surprisingly much less of a problem in 1997 than it had been earlier in the '90s, with Hollywood's action heroes foregoing the brutal exploits of the past decade, perhaps in deference to advancing age. Sylvester Stallone, for example, returned to serious acting as the anti-violent hero of *CopLand*, while Bruce Willis targeted the 'PG' audience in the futuristic sci-fi fantasy *The Fifth Element*, where the only contentious element was the sexy antics of a comedy DJ, which would have gone over the heads of most children.

For many years, the Bond films had been carefully crafted to avoid the highest categories, and British and American ratings boards were invited to see them in an unfinished state so that any problems could be ironed out in good time. When *Tomorrow Never Dies* was first examined on both sides of the Atlantic, few category difficulties seemed likely for what looked to be a mild '12'. Some weeks later, a louder and more aggressive soundtrack and polished visual effects produced a far more violent impression, which had to be toned down in Britain to retain the '12', which the public found highly acceptable.

Weaponry is a perennial problem, with a metal star in the Bond film, the flaunting of chainsticks in an American high school comedy, and the twirling of a butterfly knife in a violent sci-fi fantasy at '18'. Also cut was a technique for stealing a car in a crime thriller and the snorting of a line of cocaine in a '12' rated action adventure.

Heavy violence was removed from three Indian films to achieve the desired 'PG', since Indian families like to attend the cinema together.

Expletives were voluntarily cut from five films to secure a lower category, while blood and gore and an exploding head were trimmed from a horror comedy in order to reach a teenage audience.

No new film was cut for sex or sexual violence, although a cult movie of 1972 met with the same cuts in those areas as on its last revival in the '80s.

Statistics for 1997 are displayed graphically on the facing page. Although the number of films classified continued its increase since 1991, the number of cuts dropped significantly, to only 3.9%. Film cuts have continued at the same low rate in 1998.

Trends since 1970 are tabulated in Appendix III.

VIDEO

After the high level of video submissions in 1996, figures in 1997 began disappointingly but accelerated towards the end of the year to finish unexpectedly higher than in 1996. A consequence was to leave a considerable backlog to be carried over into 1998. A year ago, the BBFC had managed to reduce the waiting time from payment to first viewing to an average of two days, so it was disappointing to find the turn-around figure rising to 15 days at the end of 1997. The Board has already taken steps to bring this backlog down again, despite a continuing and dramatic rise in submissions in 1998.

During 1997, classification certificates were issued (or refused) to 3192 video features, as against 3726 in 1996, which represented a significant drop from year to year. Classification statistics for 1997 are displayed graphically on the following pages, together with cumulative statistics for 1985 to 1997.

In 1997, the percentages in the various categories remained much the same as the previous year. More than 46% had been classified in the 'U', 'Uc' or 'PG' categories which carry no age restrictions, and there were 1% fewer than last year in the '18' category.

Of the classified features, cuts were required in 7% of the total, much the same as in 1996. Most of the cuts at '18' were to reduce the explicitness of sex videos so as to avoid the sex shop category, the continuing decline of which was measured by the fact that only 32 videos were classified 'R18' in 1997. The Board had experimented during the year with a slight liberalisation of standards at 'R18', but this came to an end in October, since when consultations have been arranged by the Home Office between the Board, the Crown Prosecution Service, the London police, and Customs and Excise in order to achieve common standards.

Classification Information System

In May 1997, the Board introduced a new, computerised classification information system to handle the processing of all works submitted for classification. One of the aims in so doing was to update and enhance the system that had been in use for over ten years, which no longer met the requirements of the Board. The old system had been set up to track the progress of a work through each stage of the classification process and to record decisions once they were made. It also offered a simple word-processing facility. The system that replaced it had to do this and much more.

It was essential to retain the investment in the old system of stored information, and it was also essential to enhance it, to make that information more meaningful, more integrated, and more responsive to those using it. If category decisions taken at the Board are based on a body of precedent, then the greater the extent and availability of information to support and assist this decision-making process, the more useful the information becomes, and the better and more consistently decisions can be made.

The philosophy behind the design of the new system was to integrate all aspects of the work of the Board into a whole. In this way each film, video or digital game submitted for classification would be treated as a 'case', and the system would allow access from the desktop to all information associated with that case to everyone who needed it – instantly. Workflow management software was to be introduced to handle these cases. This would allow electronic scanning of all work received, and the queuing of work at each stage of the classification process in the electronic in-tray of the relevant members of staff. At the same time, the system would allow senior management to take an overview of all work in progress.

A number of immediate benefits were quickly evident, including greater process control, progress tracking, throughput efficiency, quantitative and qualitative measurement of activities, direct data input by all users, and on-line search facilities with a wider access to the corporate information base. By offering a better decision support tool, we hoped to be able to provide a better service to clients by reduced processing time (from the automation of routine tasks such as the issue of Interim Clearance Forms and classification certificates). Additional benefits included the ability to develop and enhance the system in future, giving access to the wider world and enabling greater openness to and access by the public via the Internet, as the system will support the provision of classification information to subscribers and give free public access to information about the Board and its work.

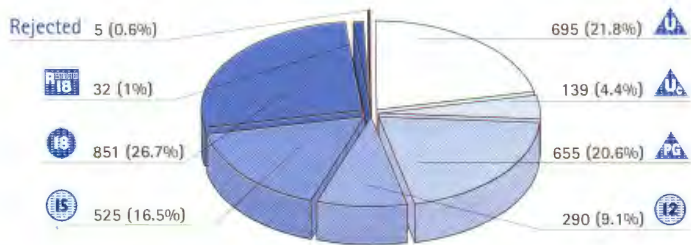
As one of the requirements of the system specification was the capability to store all the Board's statutory archive material, it should be possible to access both video and narrative records relating to the determination of category, and there is a programme to add archive material to the system in future.

The project was put out to competitive tender in 1995, with an independent consultant assisting with the adjudication. The system chosen was one that runs on Lotus Notes under UNIX. It was to be designed and installed over the years 1995-97, with a BBFC web site planned for 1998.

VIDEO STATISTICS FOR 1997

Features: 3192

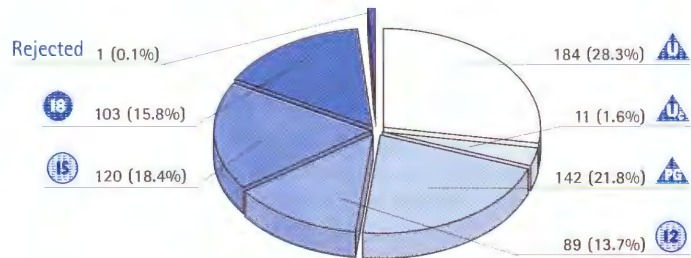
Total Cut: 224 (7%)



U	695	1 (0.1%)
U/c	139	0 (0%)
PG	655	19 (2.9%)
12	290	9 (3.1%)
15	525	13 (2.5%)
18	851	165 (19.4%)
R18	32	17 (53.1%)
Rejected	5	0 (0%)

Trailers: 649

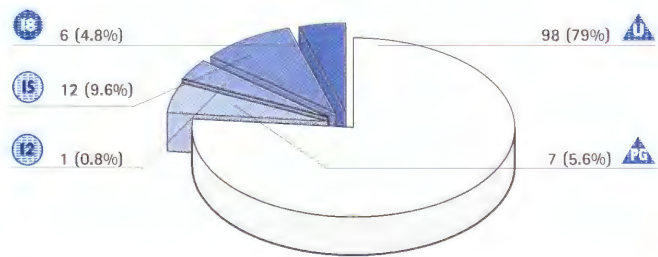
Total Cut: 41 (6.3%)



U	184	0 (0%)
U/c	11	0 (0%)
PG	142	5 (3.5%)
12	89	2 (2.2%)
15	120	6 (5%)
18	103	28 (27.1%)
R18	0	0 (0%)
Rejected	1	0 (0%)

Advertisements: 124

Total Cut: 1 (0.8%)



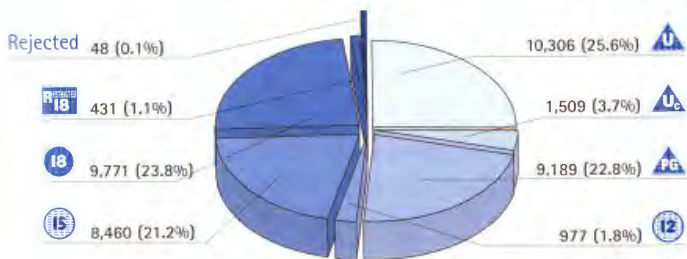
U	98	0 (0%)
U/c	0	0 (0%)
PG	7	0 (0%)
12	1	0 (0%)
15	12	0 (0%)
18	6	1 (16.6%)
R18	0	0 (0%)
Rejected	0	0 (0%)

CUMULATIVE VIDEO STATISTICS

September 1985 to December 1997

Features: 40,689

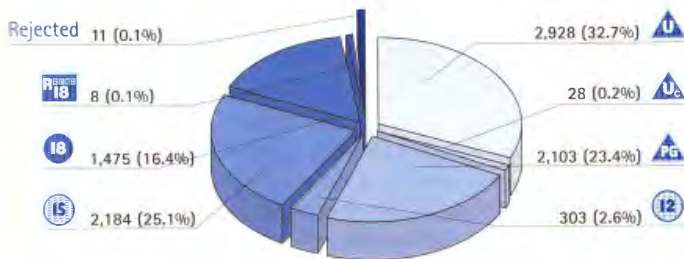
Total Cut: 2,945 (8%)



U	10306	72 (0.7%)
U/c	1509	2 (0.1%)
PG	9189	313 (3.4%)
12	977	21 (1.7%)
15	8460	420 (5.1%)
18	9771	2251 (23.4%)
R18	431	132 (28.8%)
Rejected	48	0 (0%)

Trailers: 9,039

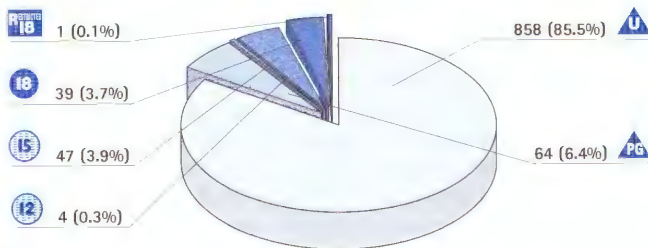
Total Cut: 755 (8.5%)



U	2928	142 (5.2%)
U/c	28	0 (0%)
PG	2103	108 (5.3%)
12	303	8 (2.8%)
15	2184	163 (7.6%)
18	1475	333 (22.2%)
R18	8	1 (12.5%)
Rejected	11	0 (0%)

Advertisements: 1,013

Total Cut: 7 (0.7%)



U	858	3 (0.4%)
U/c	0	0 (0%)
PG	64	1 (1.8%)
12	4	0 (0%)
15	47	2 (4.3%)
18	39	3 (6.1%)
R18	1	0 (0%)
Rejected	0	0 (0%)

Children

In 1997 we were brought back again and again to the protection of children, both in the legal sense, and in ensuring that they are not exposed to images they might find too disturbing, or that might provoke them to behaviour that is harmful to themselves or others. Under the Protection of Children Act 1978, it is illegal to produce, distribute or exhibit indecent photographs of a child below the age of 16, and with this in mind, some material comes under particular scrutiny every year. In a society where 'baby-faced' models are increasingly used in advertising and fashion photography to promote the sale of consumer goods, and where there is grave public concern about child abuse and the activities of paedophiles, the BBFC must give serious consideration to the way children are represented in film and video. Last year, the imminent submission of the new version of *Lolita* concentrated our minds, as had a number of videos which needed cuts under the terms of the above Act (see Review of the Year).

While it is vital that children should be protected from undesirable or harmful material, it is equally important to grant them access to as wide a range of films and videos as possible within the lower category areas. Most children are sufficiently robust to enjoy fairly intense moments in films, provided these are not unduly prolonged and are contained by other, more comforting elements. Some young children are less confident and find such intensity too frightening, but parents are usually the best judge of their own children's tolerance. The category system provides the first level of guidance for parents, but the second level is the Board's voluntary system of consumer advice for video, and now for films as well.

Research has demonstrated that children learn early on in their viewing careers to distinguish between fiction and fact. They also learn to regulate their own viewing on the basis of remembered emotional responses. A BBFC focus group of mothers of young children reminded us during the year of just how difficult it can be to predict what any individual child will find upsetting. For example, how should we classify the episode of *Thomas the Tank Engine* which rendered a three-year-old inconsolable when Thomas crashed into some buffers? Disappointments and minor disasters are a part of the life of every child, and learning to cope with such disasters is easier if rehearsed through fiction than through life. Provided there is a sound narrative structure which contains conflict or crises in a manner accessible to the young child, then 'U' becomes the likely category. However, when an infant or toddler is viewing a film or video for the first time, it is always advisable that someone should be on hand to talk through the experience and provide reassurance.

In 1997, examiners explored the 'U' category: 'UNIVERSAL - Suitable for All', and asked a fundamental question: "what makes a children's film suitable for all?" In search of an answer, with reference to children, parents, psychological and educational research, examiners undertook a comprehensive review of children's titles, both past and present, from classics such as Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Bambi* (1942) and *The Incredible Journey* (1963), through family favourites like *The Railway Children* (1970), *Star Wars* (1977) and *E.T.* (1982), to more recent titles such as *Babe*, *A Little Princess*, *Fly Away Home*, *The Lion King* and *James and the Giant Peach*. The purpose was to identify the essential qualities of a 'universal' film.

At first, it seemed that the quintessential or most suitable 'U' film was a 'squeaky clean' children's film, devoid of horrors or violence, upsetting themes or bad language. However, even a cursory survey of the titles above soon revealed childish horrors, like the wicked stepmother in *Snow White* or the dead of the World War I trenches in *A Little Princess*; violence, the spectacular space battles in *Star Wars* or brother killing brother in *The Lion King*; upsetting themes, for example loss of a parent in *Babe*, *Bambi*, *The Lion King*, *Fly Away Home*, and *James and the Giant Peach*; and occasionally bad language, for example the by now infamous insult 'penis breath' and murmured expletive 'shit' in *E.T.*

Despite the horrific, violent, upsetting and 'rude' moments in these popular films, they have all been deemed acceptable family entertainment - "suitable for all" - by the Board and audiences alike. By consensus and 'common sense', the Board and the British public have come to accept that when it comes to children's entertainment it is not so much the 'what' of a film but the 'how' and the 'why' that determine its suitability. Examiners have always recorded and analysed detail, particularly violent detail, but increasingly it is recognised that it is the context within which that detail resides that recommends its suitability, either to a particular age group or to a universal audience.

Like the rest of society, children enjoy a good story well told, and good stories invariably contain elements of drama or conflict. To be caught up in a good narrative is to engage in a world of ordered and accessible meanings. In the right context a child will achieve a sense of mastery over the fictional world, and become increasingly sophisticated and literate as experience accumulates. It is a common factor in all the titles listed above that recognisable fears and conflicts are only presented in order to be overcome or resolved. This pattern mirrors a child's real-life learning experience, and the process of story-telling has long been used to explore unspoken fears as an aid to emotional development. Indeed, overcoming such fears, if only vicariously, may provide one of a film's principal pleasures.

Given that the Board cannot hope to legislate for individual tastes or tolerances and that it is hard to predict what may 'upset' any one individual, 'suitability for all' can only be determined through an assessment of the film's positive potential when tested against its potential to disturb, harm or offend. Deciding on the classification means evaluating the theme, structure, tone and treatment of a film in terms of **morality, manners and intensity**. Safeguards for children depend on achieving the right balance, the whole against the parts, the scary against the reassuring, the pro-social against the anti-social, always remembering the overall importance of encouraging a healthy moral development (see Appendix VI, BBFC Policy Paper: Children's Films at 'U').

Violence

Amidst the press speculation and clamour which periodically decry the effects of violent videos, it is useful to remind ourselves that the phenomenon of violence in the media is not one single, easily treated issue. In its day-to-day work of classification, the Board remains concerned with a range of problems arising from different sorts of media violence, some traditional, some contemporary. That is why contextual factors, narrative, genre, style, will always be at least as significant as the actual detail seen on screen. In the end, category decisions are based on the impact of the 'film as a whole' on the 'likely audience', including those below the category age. Every viewer, young and old, brings to the viewing an accumulation of personal or cultural experiences which influence the way that he or she interprets a violent movie. Even children are aware at some level that screen violence is not the same as real violence, and their viewing experience, therefore, like that of their parents, is shaped by contextual and individual factors which make each person's interpretation of the film a personal one.

In classifying violence the Board is obliged to consider potential harm, both to the individual and to society, whilst remembering that even the youngest audience enjoys a greater degree of media sophistication than previous generations. Contemporary audiences are not passive receptacles 'to be protected at all costs' but a lively constituency aware of their own personal thresholds and willing to practice 'self-regulation' according to personal taste and previous experience. With this in mind examiners are constantly engaged in a debate which seeks to balance the rights of the robust majority against any potential harm to society, in particular the vulnerable and the young.

Where violence is a classification issue, what the Board thinks about the quality of that violence is reflected in the category awarded and will occasionally determine the need for cuts. The classification given to a film or video is one factor influencing public expectations, but in the real world it interacts with posters, advertising, reviews, the opinions of friends, plot synopses on video packs, the memory of similar films and the shock of innovations, all interacting with changes in public taste, attitudes and concerns. In such a maelstrom of influences, BBFC category decisions may not play the dominant role, but they must be trustworthy and therefore meaningful. In the Board's Draft Code of Practice (1996/97), its decisions were described as being "based on principles, informed by precedent, but applied afresh according to the context of the particular film."

In seeking to guide parents and children as to the potential suitability or unsuitability of material, the Board must continue to provide advice on the contents of the work and the reasons for the category given. A classification system is only as useful as the use to which it is put, and we are rapidly moving into a world in which the real power and responsibility to make decisions about the type or quantity of violence viewed in the new electronic media will, by necessity, remain with the individual.

A review of 1997 across the categories offers a practical demonstration of concerns arising where 'expectations' of film and video violence are challenged both for examiners and for the public, who are occasionally moved to write when they perceive that the Board has 'got it wrong'.

In the 'U' and 'PG' categories, Board policy holds that violence must be safe violence, dealing with childhood fears and the struggle between good and evil in a manner which is understandable to children. The BBFC acknowledges that being 'upset' is part of life for all children, but that violence must never exceed the levels at which children can imagine themselves surviving. Thus the Disney film *First Kid*, a comic tale of loneliness and isolation afflicting the only son of the US president, breached expectations for violence and had to be cut to reduce the sense of threat as the child hero was subjected to a psychotic gun attack in a shopping mall. The terrorisation of a child character in a conventionally safe environment was felt to be a violation of trust, as was the sudden and unexpected onset of violence so close to the end of the film. Cuts were needed and were successful in turning this film into a warning against selfishness and risk-taking, which children at a series of test screenings much enjoyed.

Unlike *First Kid*, the fantasy horror in the sequel to Spielberg's dinosaur movie *Jurassic Park* was anticipated, both by the Board and by the pre-teens fans of the first film. Enhanced technology ensured that special effects kept the children at test screenings on the edge of their seats as they squealed and shrieked in horror and delight. Children questioned during and after the test screenings had clear expectations of the film, using their 'expert' knowledge of dinosaur types and characteristics to anticipate attacks and outcomes. Many children commented noisily on the action as it happened on screen. Clearly, *The Lost World* remained heady stuff - which some of them felt might upset their younger siblings - but on balance it was clear that, armed with knowledge with which to distance and gain command over the experience, this sequel would appeal to a robust thrill-seeking audience of eight years and over, and hence it was passed 'PG' with special cinema advice.

Expectations of *Batman & Robin* starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as arch-baddie Mr Freeze were based not only on the film as fourth in a series of comic-strip adventures, but also on the reputations of Schwarzenegger himself as villain and *ER* star George Clooney as hero. The clash of good and evil within this clearly fantastic context was the subject of some debate, but it was felt that when taken as a whole this film was of a lighter tone than its predecessors in the series, and would not disturb or harm a 'PG' audience. Yet the appearance of Schwarzenegger in another children's film during 1997, the Christmas comedy *Jingle All the Way*, reminded the Board of the

need for continued vigilance as adult action heroes crossed over into family entertainment, thus building expectations and a following amongst the young.

At the other end of the category scale, the video release of Schwarzenegger's *Eraser*, the most violent Hollywood film of 1996, had to contend with these youthful expectations. Unwilling to cut the film version to '15', the film's producers had seen it flop at the UK box office, with the result that they welcomed cuts in the video version to achieve the mid-teens category. Cuts were swinging, with 43 deletions of macho brutality, most of it by the hero himself. In all, some 3 minutes 22 seconds of violence was expunged. Last year's Annual Report commented on the Hollywood superstars of the '90s whose singular achievement has been to make callousness macho. The University of Birmingham research into the viewing of such films by violent young offenders identifies the failure of empathy in these damaged youngsters who enjoy the punishment handed out in such films without ever being able to feel for the victims. This is the central problem of video violence, a problem that besets a minority of viewers who just happen to be the most dangerous young people in Britain.

Five films, twenty-eight videos and a video game were cut for violence in 1997, the lowest total for some years, which may be an indication of the end of one of the most cynical decades in Hollywood history. Most BBFC cuts were to achieve a lower category for 'borderline films', as with *Tomorrow Never Dies*, where a few cuts and a re-recorded soundtrack were sufficient to achieve a '12' rather than a '15'. Britain was the only country to impose cuts on the Bond film, but it made the film available to younger teenagers who much enjoyed it.

There were complaints from some families at the restrictiveness of the '12' given to James Bond, to *Independence Day*, and to *Star Trek First Contact*, all of which contained scenes of violence, horror and in one case torture, which examiners considered potentially disturbing to pre-teens.

The unparalleled success of *Jurassic Park* and *Independence Day* heralded the return of the monster movie, which, for many adults, aroused expectations of the old 'X' certificate, but as horror crosses over increasingly into fantasy and sci-fi territory, so the younger audience for fantasy and science fiction moves up to greet it. *The Relic*, a traditional formula-horror featuring a lizard monster let loose in a city museum, offered conventional gory pleasures. Strategies for 'coping' with that sort of simple-minded horror in movies appear to be well developed amongst mid-teens viewers, many of whom approach such movies anticipating the social pleasures of testing their strength of stomach against their peers. The forthcoming *Godzilla* will no doubt offer similar pleasures, and it was on that basis that a '15' was given to *Starship Troopers*, in which the human race is mobilised to defend itself against the space bugs. Starting out as a satire on gung-ho militarism, the film rapidly escalated into a harrowing series of battles in which, for many viewers, the context of horror was insufficiently fanciful to mitigate the violence. On video, where there was far less control of audience age, the category was raised to '18'.

Five other '15' films were reassessed for video. *Ransom* and *Sleepers* had been 'borderline' decisions, given a '15' on film because they had much to offer to mid-teenagers, but too disturbingly violent for the unenforceable '15' in the home. *CopLand* was a narrower decision, with Sylvester Stallone forsaking his macho stereotype and returning to straight and powerful acting in a police corruption thriller. Scenes of graphic brutality and profanity illustrating the world of hard-bitten US cops seemed containable in the opening scenes of the film, but the blood-soaked, slow-motion climax when Stallone dispensed justice with a gun seemed far too violent for the teenage video audience, and the film was reclassified '18' on video.

Two other borderline decisions were reassessed on video, not so much for the change of medium, but to correct a decision which with hindsight was felt to be far too lenient. *Con Air* starred

Nicolas Cage as the victim of injustice transported with a group of hard-bitten criminals on a prison transport plane and struggling to prevent a riot by the forces of anarchy and sadistic destruction. A conventional narrative and tongue-in-cheek approach is finally subverted as the audience is invited to revel in stark brutality, and the category was raised to '18' on video in order to deflect the attentions of underage fans of violence and anti-social mayhem.

Finally the most successful English-language vehicle yet for legendary kung fu star and former comedy stuntman Jackie Chan, *Rumble in the Bronx*, had been passed '15' for the cinema without sufficient attention being paid to the imitability of a gang attack on the diminutive hero in which bottles were thrown into the air and swatted with a baseball bat. On video, the likelihood of broken glass being used offensively by teenagers in this fashion was too plausible to be allowed, and the scene was heavily cut as a condition of certification.

In the '18' category, the sadistic details of mutilation and torture cut from a variety of exploitation videos make for depressing viewing, since there was no defence of narrative context available. These were films in which the plot was merely an excuse for the violence, and the pleasures on offer were those of watching the infliction of pain and injury for its own sake. Even at '18', the Board maintains a strict line on sadistic entertainment and will continue to do so.

Animals

Of all the forms of violence seen by the Board, the most disturbingly callous are those involving cruelty to animals, since such scenes are unsimulated and involve real suffering by living creatures. There is today a general revulsion against the barbarous treatment of animals in films, which includes not only the infliction of pain or injury, but also the psychological harm which comes from 'goading an animal to fury or terror' (Cinematograph Films [Animals] Act 1937). This year an Indian video was cut to remove the sight of three horses tripped into dangerous falls, while a Hong Kong video was cut for a scene in which a horse was made to gallop through a stone wall which crashed onto the stunned animal as it fell. Two videos were cut to remove cockfights in which the cocks were goaded to fury sufficient to make them injure each other, while another Hong Kong video featured scenes in which a barnyard of hens was systematically shot and run over with a car. John Waters' cult bad taste movie *Pink Flamingos* was revived on film and video and had cuts imposed, as before, to remove a sex scene in which a squawking chicken is crushed to death between a copulating couple. Another video was cut for a scene of rats being shot, and the re-release of the 1950 Rossellini film *Stromboli* had a single cut to a scene in which a ferret was goaded into killing a rabbit. Finally, a music video cynically accompanied a rock track with footage from the notorious 1936 black and white film *The Charge of the Light Brigade* which featured numerous fatal horse falls, outrage at which contributed to the original British legislation. It is some consolation after seeing this material to note that there seems to be a steady fall in illegal animal footage in recent years, with half this year's examples taken from revivals.

The Board also takes seriously the impact of simulated cruelty to animals, where such scenes may inspire copycat behaviour. The film which created the greatest controversy in this area was *Gummo*, which portrayed a scrapheap community in which two impoverished teenagers make a living by killing cats and dogs and selling them for food. A press story long before the film opened suggested that animals had suffered in the making of the film, whereas in fact all animal action had been monitored by the American Humane Association, who gave the film a clean bill of health. When the Board later examined the film, it was clear that the two boys were anything but role models and that their behaviour was presented as an example of depravity and moral corruption. The film is wholly unsympathetic to their activities and, in the Board's view, it fell within the legitimate range of the '18' category.

Weapons and Imitable Techniques

The Board maintains a strict weapons policy and continues to cut scenes in which illegal or imitable weapons are glamorously displayed. Criteria for cuts in this policy area include the availability of the weapon, the extent to which it is glamorised, and the instructional potential of the scene in question. The potential for harm is the guiding principal. Combat knives are now legally controlled in Britain, since in recent years these have been readily available and there have been several high profile cases of stabbing. Thus the John Woo film *Face/Off*, which featured extensive scenes of balletic, stylised gun violence, received only two cuts to remove the demonstrative twirling of an illegal, double-bladed butterfly knife. Two other videos were cut to remove the twirling of butterfly knives and a third for a scene in which the victim's mouth was impaled on a thrown knife. Another video was cut to remove the sight of a pen used to stab a victim in the eye, an imitable scene of breaking and entering using a knife was cut, as well as a scene in which a penknife was used to start a car. Perhaps most worrying of all, a video was cut for the sight of a large combat knife being handled by children as they were given detailed and realistic instruction by an adult on how to slit someone's throat.

In the past, martial arts weapons have been so easily copied by ingenious delinquents that the BBFC adopted a strict policy under which they have been cut from films likely to appeal to violent young offenders, including the very young who are increasingly implicated in juvenile crime. Thus cuts to flails or chainsticks were made in seven videos up and down the category scale where they were used in a context of fighting, including three videos at '18', a '15', a '12' and two at 'PG', yet they were not removed from a non-violent episode of the comedy series *Friends*, which was not likely to be viewed by aficionados of such weapons. One slapstick comedy classified '12' incorporated expert martial arts fighting that included chainsticks, metal throwing stars and a double ear-clap that can damage the eardrums; all were cut. Metal stars were also cut from five other features, including the Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* ('12') and two videos aimed at a junior audience and classified 'PG'.

Ten other videos were cut for easily imitable combat blows, head butts, neck breaks, martial arts kicks, double ear-claps etc. A Jean-Claude van Damme 'actioner' was left uncut on film, but had a number of cuts on video to potentially imitable techniques – use of a flick-knife, arm break, chop to neck, wrist break and close-ups of stabbing. Like Schwarzenegger and Seagal, Van Damme is a glamorous role model for violent young offenders. Other videos cut on grounds of potential imitability included one in which barbed wire was used as a garrote and another in which a baseball bat was used in a gang attack to smash bottles at a defenceless victim. Also, of course, there were the usual criminal techniques of lock-picking and the use of a 'slim jim' to lever open car doors.

The issue of weapons remains of considerable concern to society, as our communications with police, magistrates and other organisations confirms. On the other side are the legion of Bruce Lee fans, eager to see scenes of *nunchukas* (chainsticks) restored to films such as *Enter the Dragon*. At the present moment, when there is so much concern about weapons and screen violence generally, it seems inappropriate even to consider liberalising in the area of weaponry, especially given the harm criteria laid down by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

No mention has yet been made here of the problem of gunplay and shooting, which form a significant part of much contemporary cinema. Although this issue has always been significant in the determination of category, and may even be subject to cuts on grounds of the levels of violence, it has not yet come under the remit of the Board's weapons policy. When challenged, we have always been able to reply that Britain is not yet a gun culture. Recent evidence indicates that this may be changing. In 1997, the year that handguns were banned, the Board refused a certificate to

a video purporting to provide instructions in the use of a range of handguns supplied to the S.A.S. In reality, this documentary was merely a celebration of guns and how to use them for killing people. Guns are still available on the black market, and more and more children and young people are carrying them in the streets of Britain's cities. It cannot be long before the glamorisation of guns in films and videos seems as potentially anti-social as the glamorising of knives and martial arts weapons. Already, they are a lot more dangerous and have a higher mortality rate.

Drugs

Drugs, drug abuse and drug-related problems are constantly in the news in Britain and abroad, and recent UK studies have highlighted the links between drug abuse and crime. The government has recently launched a programme of drugs education targeting all schoolchildren and young people, and this is in tandem with expected improvements in treatment and legislative changes to the penalties facing drug dealers. It is not surprising, therefore, and indeed should be expected, that film-makers will often feature aspects of drug-taking and drug problems in their films. The responsible treatment of drug-related issues in films is to be applauded, since it is important that films attempt, wherever possible, to present a clearly balanced view of this major and complex social issue.

The BBFC examines the cinematic treatment of drug use in films very carefully. It is especially vigilant about portrayals which glamorise the practice, for example linking it specifically to sex, which can create a lastingly pleasurable association in the minds of viewers. The Board keeps in touch with current research and training practices in the field in order to remain up to date with issues.

The moving image is a powerful medium, and we must exercise our responsibilities carefully when attractive role models and identification figures are seen using drugs, particularly when there appear to be few, if any, adverse consequences of their actions. We are also concerned about portrayals of drug use which normalise the activity by showing drug-taking as part and parcel of the characters' lives without offering any critique or comment.

In the '80s the anti-drugs campaign of the Reagan presidency used its links with Hollywood to persuade producers to look more carefully at whether or not their films 'sell drugs to kids'. The campaign had a dramatic impact on scriptwriters and directors, and very few films these days glamourise drugs in the way they used to 15 or 20 years ago. Sometimes, however, as pointed out in the Annual Report of 1989, "through misplaced zeal or a tendency to sensationalise the dirt and degradation of the drugs scene, they create an outlaw culture which attracts precisely those to whom the boredom of a safe but sorry existence is no longer enough." *Pulp Fiction* and *Trainspotting*, both '18', ran that risk in recent years, and both were cut on video to reduce detailed depictions of heroin injection which could be played again and again in all their step-by-step, hypnotically fascinating detail.

In 1997, the hard-hitting *Nil By Mouth* ('18') portrayed a drug-abusing sub-culture as a world of self-destructive despair, while avoiding the sort of exploitative or instructional detail which has compromised the anti-drugs messages of other films. *Trees Lounge* ('15') portrayed a group of drug-using characters in some depth, placing them in a naturalistic context which allowed the audience to understand their drug use as a symptom of their weaknesses as people, an approach to drugs which is now seen as having the greatest likelihood of getting an anti-drugs message across to teenagers. Three features were cut by the Board, one of them a '12'-rated action film based on a well known TV series, in which the sight of a character in a gambling club was cut as he was preparing a line of cocaine and then snorting the drug through a rolled up piece of paper.

The sequence was felt to be not only instructional but likely to sell the pleasures of drug-taking to an impressionable young audience. The other two were '18' videos in one of which an attractive anti-hero was depicted in two lovingly shot sequences indulging in the step-by-step process of heroin injection, with needles piercing flesh and snaking through distended veins, and back-lit shots of syringes spurting fluid into the air in a manner that clearly glamourised one of the most pernicious narcotics by fetishising the syringe and its use. For the same reasons, cuts were made to an '18' video which showed the use of a syringe to inject the vein in a man's neck, while the trailer of the same work was cut for similar reasons, including the sight of a man licking a syringe prior to injecting.

Language

The Board has always recognised that the British public is uniquely sensitive to bad language, more so in fact than the citizens of any other English-speaking country. Moreover, English-speakers seem to be more concerned about language than the speakers of any other tongue. Why this should be so has its roots in cultural history, but there is little uniformity even in Britain. Older viewers (those over 55) are markedly more sensitive to bad language than younger viewers, and women more sensitive than men. Regionally, sensitivity to bad language seems to increase the further north you go, or the further from London. Assessing what constitutes bad language, and in what circumstances it is acceptable for different ages, is anything but simple, and research consistently identifies wide variations in attitude between different households and different parts of the country.

In order to stay in tune with the broad majority of national opinion, the Board takes note of letters from the public, TV broadcasting standards and social attitudes surveys by organisations like the Broadcasting Standards Commission, from whose research the above data was drawn. The Board's own research includes questionnaire-based surveys and focus group discussions, like the major review of children's material at 'U' in mid-1997, which included specific and detailed questions on attitudes to language. The responses confirmed that the acceptability of very mild bad language in this material depends not just on the words used but also on their frequency, context, and the manner in which they are used. Parents were most worried about aggressive use, but were also concerned that comedic use could encourage imitation by young children. In the light of the review, policy guidelines were clarified, with the result that infrequent and unremarkable use of the very mildest swearwords ('God', 'hell', 'damn') will continue to be allowed at 'U', whilst only in exceptional circumstances will other mild swearwords (e.g. 'bloody') be used. Where this occurs, it will always be highlighted in Consumer Advice.

The fact that language continues to feature as a major public concern underlines the need for continued sensitivity, especially in the 'U', 'PG' and '12' categories which are deemed suitable for children. The removal of all but one 'bloody' from the 'U'-rated Disney remake of *101 Dalmatians* was insufficient to prevent two complaints, but this must be set against the enormous numbers who had seen the video and the misleading impression a 'PG' would have given. Similar language in the charming British film *Fairy Tale: A True Story* has attracted not a single complaint to date. The most popular film of the year, *Men in Black*, prompted three complaints about mild bad language, despite having had two moderate references to genitalia removed for the 'PG', yet clearly the vast majority were satisfied with the classification as were the countless children who enjoyed the film. Of more concern was the British comedy *Fierce Creatures*, which, despite having one strong expletive removed, attracted 14 letters of complaint which cited both the moderate swearing and sexual references as evidence of its unsuitability for pre-teenage children. When the film was reassessed for video, the Board agreed and the category was raised to '12'.

The introduction of the '12' classification (in 1989 for film, in 1994 for video) led to the pragmatic decision to allow a single strong expletive in some '12' films and videos, but this will always depend on context. When used aggressively or in an overtly sexual way, it is still unacceptable, and a sound cut was required in the Julia Roberts film *My Best Friend's Wedding* before it could be passed '12'. On the '15'/'18' borderline, a proliferation of sexual swearwords can rule out the '15', as with the 350-plus expletives in the Welsh film *Twin Town*. Of just as much relevance is the way such language is used, with offensive, derogatory and aggressive uses marking out a number of stand-up comedy videos as '18' material. The strength, frequency and context of bad language will continue to be a key issue in classification decisions across the full range of categories.

Foreign Language Material

As always, a proportion of the Board's work involved the classification of films and videos in the untranslated languages of Britain's ethnic minorities, work which relies on the skills of the Board's multi-lingual examiners and occasional interpreters. Most of this material is family-oriented, for example long-running Cantonese TV serials and feature films in Hindi or Cantonese aimed at a cross-generational audience. Over 200 episodes of the Hong Kong serial *A Kindred Spirit* were viewed in 1997, bringing the total number of classified episodes to over 700. These serials are hugely popular with Britain's Chinese community and are regarded as a valuable link with the language and culture of South China, which includes not just Hong Kong but Shanghai. Police and crime dramas from Hong Kong are more of a problem, often incurring cuts in martial arts weaponry or excessive violence.

Hindi films and videos present relatively few classification problems. Nor do the small number of Punjabi submissions, the handful of videos in Tamil and Arabic, or the sporadic appearance of cinema films in Arabic, Gujarati, Bengali, and Urdu. Against the trend, there has been an increasing number of Tamil films for the cinema, but very few Tamil videos, despite the evidence of Tamil tapes in the shops. Many foreign language videos clearly manage to evade the classification system, including those in Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, Greek, and various West African languages. The failure of distributors to classify such material reflects the high cost of classification in relation to the modest profits which can be made from titles with limited distribution potential, which may rent for as little as 50p per night. The benign nature of much of this material is reflected in the low categories and relative scarcity of cuts in the films that are submitted.

The main issue in Indian films is violence, with bad language and sex largely absent from these works. Where cuts are made, they are often in response to requests from distributors for lower categories, particularly for the cinema, where age-bars would exclude the family audience on whom commercial success depends. The practice of pre-cutting Hindi films results in versions which are often a travesty of the original work, but when the violence is restored for video, the category is often raised to '15' or '18'. The Board tolerates this practice since, for the most part, the real audience for Hindi films is adult, and the presence of children in the cinema merely reflects the importance of family cohesion and the reluctance of Asian parents to leave their children at home, particularly when they are too young to choose their own entertainment.

One of the most interesting Indian releases of the year was the Hindi blockbuster *Border*, which saw a moment of rare controversy in the Asian community. Dealing with incidents during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, it presented a rather partisan and jingoistic account of the part played by a group of Indian soldiers during a decisive battle. Before its release, the film was accused of exploiting political, religious and national conflicts in the subcontinent, with the specific charge of being anti-Muslim. The controversy was heightened by the outbreak of an unrelated fire at a Delhi

cinema in which many members of the audience were killed. Even before the film arrived in Britain, inflammatory rumours about its contents were spread, including the claim that one scene showed Hindu soldiers burning a copy of the Qur'an (Koran). Violent disturbances broke out in Leeds and, following the release of the film, there was an arson attack on a north London cinema where it was playing. The Board had taken pains to ensure that there was no direct incitement to religious or national hatred and, more specifically, that there was no truth in the allegation about the burning of the Muslim holy book. Having satisfied itself on all these points, the Board could find no grounds for restricting its release, but the film was considered so offensive by sections of the Asian community that it was heavily pre-edited by the distributors, with most scenes of violence removed, and was able to be classified 'PG'. On video, it was released unedited at '18', but as with many contentious titles, once people had a chance to see it for themselves, tension was dissipated. The same response greeted another political film, *Maachis*, which dealt with the issue of Sikh Separatism in the Punjab.

Cinemas showing Hindi films flourished in 1997, with dedicated picture-houses opening in London and other cities. Multiplex chains like Warner, UCI and Virgin recognised the popularity of Indian films and programmed mass-appeal blockbusters like *Dil To Pagal Hai*, *Hero No. 1*, *Pardes* and *Yes Boss*, which attracted huge audiences. There were even signs that the conservatism of mainstream Hindi cinema was beginning to relax with the release of *Tamanna*, a blockbuster dealing with transvestism and unconventional family relationships.

The main problem posed by Asian films has been the violence, sex and sexual violence in subtitled films from Hong Kong, many designed for the new 'Category 3' for audiences aged 18 and over. Here, the exploitation of women as victims of both violence and sexual violence often exceeds the limits of acceptability in Britain, resulting not just in cuts but in rejection, as happened twice in 1997 to a Hong Kong rape film, in both its uncut and re-edited versions.

While cinema audiences for untranslated material seem to be booming, the numbers of foreign language titles submitted on video in 1997 unaccountably declined, in all languages, after a significant rise in 1996. In that year, most of the rise was accounted for by Cantonese, and this year that language saw the biggest fall, by a massive 46% after last year's record figures. It may be that satellite or cable TV have cut into this market, or that lower levels of enforcement have encouraged evasion of the law. The latter is certainly likely with minority languages like Tamil and Punjabi, where most of the trade is in unclassified tapes.

Overall, the 1997 figures for untranslated foreign language videos fell from 14% of BBFC submissions in 1996 to only 9%, slightly worse than in 1995. Not only Cantonese, but also Hindi fell away sharply, to its lowest figure since video classification began. Statistics for 1997 are as follows:

Foreign Language Video Statistics for 1997

Language	Total	U	PG	12	15	18	With cuts
Arabic	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Cantonese	194	38	82	22	30	22	10
Hindi	86	5	23	10	35	13	1
Punjabi	3	-	-	1	2	-	-
Tamil	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Urdu	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Welsh	4	3	1	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	291	48	107	34	67	35	11

The significance of these low figures can be more fully appreciated by comparison with the cumulative figures below, which cover 13 years under the Act. There is no evidence of a decline in audience enthusiasm for foreign language material, but Arabic, Greek, Punjabi, Urdu and Turkish videos are now thriving in ethnic areas of London quite outside the jurisdiction of the law.

Legal powers of enforcement are greater than ever, but few local authorities seem to be using the 'by-pass' powers provided by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which made it possible to trace offences back from dealer to distributor, wherever that distributor is based. In the '80s, there was a vast black market in unclassified foreign language tapes. It would be a pity to see those conditions return.

Cumulative Foreign Language Video Statistics for 1985-97

Language	Total	U	PG	12	15	18	With cuts
Arabic	175	33	77	3	54	8	4
Bengali	15	-	3	-	9	3	2
Cantonese	2749	640	1148	119	609	233	106
Filipino	8	-	-	1	4	3	3
Greek	166	25	28	-	102	11	1
Gujarati	33	10	20	-	3	-	-
Haryavni	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hindi	2413	401	829	26	814	343	161
Mandarin	5	-	-	-	4	1	1
Punjabi	368	24	96	3	165	80	31
Tamil	36	2	14	1	17	2	6
Turkish	339	33	123	-	154	29	12
Ukrainian	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Urdu	253	47	89	1	76	40	24
Welsh	16	5	7	2	-	2	-
TOTALS	6578	1220	2434	157	2012	755	351

Sexual Violence

During 1997, there were cuts in 44 works to remove or reduce scenes of sexual violence. Most of them were for '18' and only one was on film, *Pink Flamingos*, John Waters' notorious 1972 exercise in deliberate bad taste, which was resubmitted for a modern classification. Along with other issues, this contained the prolonged sexual abuse and forcible artificial insemination of a woman, which was again cut as a condition of classification. For the second year running, no new films presented us with sexual violence problems.

Sadly, this trend was not mirrored on video. Action videos from the Far East and Japanese manga cartoons accounted for the lion's share of those works, which contained scenes of sexual or eroticised violence which were as harrowing and disconcerting as we have ever seen. Acts of violence inflicted on women, and in three cases men, were horrific in their strength and scope. They included naked women being sexually assaulted, threatened, tortured and mutilated, often with knives or guns; women having their clothes ripped off or cut off; women being terrorised, humiliated, gagged and bound. An additional component of many of the scenes was the sight of women protesting, screaming, struggling, or attempting to resist these assaults. And central to all, were scenes of women forced to engage in a range of sexual acts against their will, sometimes with several men simultaneously, all for the apparent sexual gratification of male aggressors. In

two cases, sexual violence was cut from manga cartoons for '15', and three cuts were made to dialogue references or commentary, one of these for an in-store promotional reel of trailers seeking an overall 'PG' classification.

In an isolated case, a company logo contained highly glamorised and eroticised images of blood trickling over a woman's breasts. This logo was created as a brand image designed to sell recycled '70s titles, an era notorious for its representations of sexual violence, and for its often implicit acceptance of violence to women in the media. The Board decided that these images in the context of a company promotion were both inappropriate and potentially harmful, as they would have been repeated in every release by that company and probably in trailers and advertising as well. The logo was rejected in its submitted form.

It is, of course, harrowing to witness such degradation in one's daily work, but the Board's examining staff, far from becoming immune to such horrors, retain an acute sensitivity to the potentially harmful and de-civilising impact that these scenes might have on individual viewers and, in turn, on society. It is appropriate therefore that the Board continues to maintain its strict sexual violence policy, insisting on the cutting of scenes which sell forcible stripping or coercive sex as entertainment, particularly where women are shown to enjoy the consequences, since this only reinforces the myth that women enjoy being raped. It is also Board policy to cut scenes which link violence with sex where there is little or no narrative justification. It used to be common in the '70s to find porno rape scenes in most adult pornography, but the influence of women on the contents of American porn has made such scenes rare. In the year under review, cuts of that kind were made in only two such sex videos, one of which included the prolonged sight of a woman throttled and threatened with drowning after sex, a particularly worrying scene for video, where sexual violence could end up being used for the stimulation of masturbatory fantasies.

Not all scenes of sexual violence are cut, however, since rape is a legitimate theme for film-makers to explore dramatically, often with responsible results, and the Board continues to consider both the context and treatment of rape on screen before reaching a classification decision. When works previously classified on film are resubmitted for video classification, the Board is given an opportunity to review the category decision and the level of intervention needed for video viewing in the home. There were several such cases in 1997, among them *Sleepers*, a major Hollywood feature passed '15' on film but reclassified '18' on video. The pivotal scenes contained a discreetly handled but disturbing scene of homosexual rape in prison, and the higher category was a precautionary measure to keep this scene and the film's moral ambiguity away from younger teenagers. Also subject to review was *Showgirls*, in which the brutal restraint and gang rape of a helpless young woman was cut far more heavily for video release because of its erotic context and insensitive treatment. Another work containing sexual violence against men was *Hustler White*, a quasi-documentary about gay prostitutes in Los Angeles, which had already been cut on film. On video, after much debate, two scenes involving the detailed depiction of sado-masochistic practices were much more heavily cut to reduce the possibility of harm to potential viewers through imitation.

Sex and Pornography

After contemplating the sexually violent or degrading forms of sex regularly cut by the Board on deprave-and-corrupt grounds, it is pleasant to note that non-violent sex between consenting adults is now relatively uncontentious. At '18', the Board receives very few complaints about the frank depiction of normal sexual relations, provided the sex is consenting and the pleasure mutual. Indeed, so reluctant have people become to condemn intimate depictions of activities which they themselves enjoy that public prosecutors have virtually abandoned bringing such material before a

jury. During the '90s, reasonably explicit depictions of sex and sexual organs have been available to adults in the form of sex education at '18' with a total absence of public complaint, and most adults have been able to see such material as a matter of choice. Women customers admit to watching such tapes for pleasure since they do not attract the odium that attaches to entering a sex shop.

Sex education and health education tapes have been viewed by the police, but no charge has ever been brought, since bona fide education is covered by the 'public good' defence of the Obscene Publications Act. It seems doubtful that juries would find such tapes depraving and corrupting even without this defence, yet sex entertainment tapes containing similar images are routinely seized by the police and taken before magistrates, where they are often deemed to be obscene merely on grounds of sexual explicitness. The 'R18' category, which is restricted to licensed sex shops, was designed to provide an outlet for such material in segregated premises, but there are very few such licensed premises. In recent years, there has been a vast increase in the number of unlicensed sex shops in London and nationwide. These shops carry illegal and unclassified sex material, much of it containing violent and degrading scenes of a kind which the Board would cut without hesitation. The City of Westminster Act gave the police the power to close down black market premises, but the owners still seem able to move their illicit operations around between a number of empty shops in the same vicinity.

In June 1996, after discussing the problem with the police, a Home Office Minister in the last government suggested to the Board that closing shops and seizing assets might have to be accompanied by steps to lure black market customers back into the licensed sex shops, where they would find only consenting, non-violent sex, but of a more explicit kind than hitherto. Since video classification was introduced in 1985, the BBFC has regularly removed from sex videos all pornographic images of rape, sadism and the degradation of women, elements the Board finds genuinely depraving and corrupting. When the Video Recordings Bill was being debated in Standing Committee in 1984, MPs on both sides of the House accepted the argument that censorship could be used to separate sex from violence, while allowing the remaining erotic material to provide a safety valve for adults through the 'R18' category. But the task of assessing the limits of legality in licensed sex shops was to provide the BBFC with a major challenge over the next 12 years, and the idea of liberalising on explicitness without infringing the law was to prove one hurdle too many.

In 1984, the Attorney General conceded in Parliament that the BBFC could not do its job without being told the results of all obscenity cases involving videos. For most of the '80s, the DPP's office sent us those results fairly regularly, but in the '90s this advice fell away, and it is now six years since regular notification was provided. How the Board was expected to keep in touch with judicial standards is difficult to fathom, but we decided that general guidance on Section 2 proceedings before a jury would have to suffice, since few records were being kept regarding Section 3 forfeiture proceedings before magistrates. In September 1997, we were notified that Customs and Excise had considered seizing some copies of 'R18' material which had, after classification, been exported to Europe for duplication and re-importation into Britain. The police agreed with Customs that the material was of a kind normally subject to forfeiture orders before magistrates. Discussions at the Home Office between all the enforcement agencies and the Board resulted in a series of consultations on standards between the interested parties. For the first time it became clear that the intentions of Parliament in handling the problem of non-violent erotica through segregation rather than prohibition would be impossible to implement given the very strict standards applied in the magistrates' courts. In October 1997, the Board returned to the standards it used to apply before that failed experiment. Pornography will once again be swept under the carpet where, in the name of the law, it will be mixed up with violence and degradation. The law may be an ass, but it is the Board's job to uphold it, even in the face of astonished disbelief from the rest of the world.

VIDEO APPEALS COMMITTEE

The Video Appeals Committee is an independent body constituted under section 4(3) of the Act to hear appeals from video distributors against any decision of the Board which, in their view, is more restrictive than warranted.

Over the thirteen years from 1985 to 1997, there have been eleven appeals, of which five have been granted and six dismissed. Three more have been lodged so far in 1998. Of the eleven already decided, six appeals were against the Board's decision to award an 'R18' classification to sex videos, which would have restricted supply to licensed sex shops. Three of these appeals were granted and three refused.

Two appeals were against the Board's refusal to classify on legal grounds, in one case blasphemy, in the other criminal libel. In the blasphemy case, the appeal was dismissed by both the Appeals Committee and the European Court of Human Rights, both of whom agreed that the video was legally blasphemous under British law and that the law was consistent with the European Convention on Human Rights. This decision was described in detail in last year's Annual Report (1996/97).

The reject on libel grounds was a Pakistani video which, in the Board's view, tended to encourage the assassination of the novelist Salman Rushdie. The appeal was successful when Rushdie himself wrote to say he would not press libel charges since that would deny the distributor's freedom of expression. This gesture had such an impact that, even after the issue of a BBFC certificate, the video was never released.

The ninth appeal was against the Board's rejection of a women's prison film, *Bare Behind Bars*, which the Board described as "a sex film in which the governor and prison officers are all engaged in the sexual abuse of prisoners, the most attractive of whom are sold as sex slaves for rich lesbian clients ... sex under duress was the main attraction on offer." The Appeals Committee took the unanimous view that the video was "almost entirely devoted to the degradation of young women" and that the Board was justified in refusing a certificate. In this case, the decisions of the Board and the Appeals Committee were taken to Judicial Review, but ten days before the hearing, the application was unexpectedly withdrawn and the case dropped. No explanation was ever given.

The tenth appeal was against the Board's refusal of a certificate to a horror video, *Boy Meets Girl*, 90% of which took place in a torture chamber. It was a student film which showed some talent but little commercial promise, and it was passed '18' for the cinema to encourage the film-maker and give him the chance to learn from the experience of an audience. On video, however, where it was intended to be marketed as a horror film, it seemed a very different proposition. In September 1995, the Board wrote to the film-maker explaining its reasons for rejecting the work on video. The letter (Appendix VII, Rejection Letter on *Boy Meets Girl*) explained that the BBFC had always been cautious about sustained depictions of sadistic torture, particularly in the home where there was no reliable control of audience age. There was also deep concern that, marketed as a horror shocker, the video would be drawn to the attention of sensation-seekers who would view the torture scenes out of context for the sadistic frisson they offered. In 1996, an appeal was lodged against this decision, but the hearing was much delayed, being rescheduled several times in 1997 and heard at last in January 1998.

This was the first appeal against the rejection of a work on video which had received a certificate on film, and as such, it was an important precedent, since it drew the attention of the panel to the

difference in viewing conditions between cinema and home video. The work begins as the male victim is lured to a woman's flat in the expectation of sex, but he is quickly drugged and wakes up to find himself in a torture chamber where he is strapped to a chair, humiliated, and teased with a knife. At first, it seems that one is watching a feminist piece about the turning of the tables on a predatory male by one of his many female victims, but this is before the punishment moves beyond threats to detailed and graphic physical torment, after which the means outstrip any meaningful or justifiable ends, feminist or otherwise. Suddenly, the first tormenter vanishes, to be replaced by her erstwhile female assistant, who admits to having murdered her predecessor so she could enjoy the cruelty for its own sake. "Do it for fun," she tells her victim, as threats give way to degradation and torture, mental as well as physical. "Power is gained from torture," she continues, "the longer the torture, the greater the power." Then she disembowels him, cradles him in her arms, and strangles him to death. In an epilogue, she gives the same treatment to a young, bewildered black woman. Gender is irrelevant. The torture never ends.

Since no social point was being made, this seemed to the Board to be torture for torture's sake. The film distributor who first submitted the work told the Board that the film release was of no commercial potential except as a means of garnering publicity for a subsequent video release. And on video, sections of this work seemed wholly exploitative, with no moral viewpoint to align the viewer on the side of the victim rather than the aggressor.

The film-makers explained that the video would be marketed as a "psychological horror film ... for an audience that, in the main, had a penchant for violent films," who would be converted by the film's "anti-violent argument". Even if that were true, the Board argued, it would require a viewing of the whole film in sequence, an experience that was far more likely in the cinema than on video. The Board did not accept that the depictions in the video were set in an aversive context, particularly not for horror fans. On the contrary, the risk of confirming sadistic tastes or reinforcing sadistic impulses was a real one, given the scenes of mutilation, sexual violation and evisceration which could be seen again and again in the home.

In their written decision, the Video Appeals Committee conceded that the treatment of the subject was questionable in that torture pervaded every scene of the film and there was no justification of it. The appellants argued that the film was "trying to educate a wider audience on the futility and inhumanity of torture ... to show how awful torture is." This argument was not accepted by any member of the panel. The decision was divided. Two members of the panel could not take the video seriously, finding it boring and unlikely to influence anybody, whether adults or young persons. The majority, however, found the video disturbing and, in one case, "frightful, disgusting and frightening, particularly in the home". They felt it missed by a long way the message it was trying to give, and there "was a danger that a significant minority might be brutalised by it, whether over or under 18 ... They felt that sadistic impulses could be awakened and could be harmful to society." By a majority of 3 to 2 the appeal was dismissed.

The major appeal of 1997 was against the Board's refusal of a certificate to the car-racing video game *Carmageddon*, which was commented on in last year's Annual Report before the written decision had become available. This was the first game ever submitted to the Board in which points were awarded for the deliberate killing of innocent victims, and the Board's rejection of the game was based on the view that a demolition derby in which drivers are rewarded for the hit-and-run killing of innocent pedestrians was morally reprehensible and likely to encourage callousness towards the suffering of others. The 'action replay' facility in which the game stops while the camera slowly circles round the bloody victims only underlined the cynicism.

The Appeal was heard at the end of October, with the panel splitting 3 to 2 in favour of the appellant. Last year, the Board's Reply to this appeal was reproduced in the Appendices. This year

we are able to include the long written decision of the Video Appeals Committee, with full arguments on both sides. (Appendix IV, Video Appeals Committee Decision on *Carmageddon*). Among the issues on which the decision turned were:

- (1) whether a game in which the victims were digitised figures could be properly described as containing "gross violence to humans or animals," which was the test needed to justify forfeiting the general exemption from classification for video games?
- (2) what was meant by "human", or at least "human-like" figures?
- (3) was the central motivation of the game, i.e. the random running over of animals or pedestrians for points, one that was perceived as anti-social and potentially harmful, and was the option of placing the games-player directly behind the wheel, thus giving him the killer's point of view, acceptable?
- (4) was the motivation of 'killing for kicks' acceptable in a game which could be accessible to children in the home?
- (5) could the age categories be trusted to be enforced in the shops?
- (6) were children or teenagers likely to have access to games played on PCs rather than consoles?
- (7) was an interactive game which offers bonuses for violent behaviour more or less likely than violent narrative videos to encourage violent behaviour in real life?
- (8) how realistic was the violence in the game, how harmful, what was the impact of the speed, the context of a car-racing game and demolition derby, the 'fun' aspect of actually playing it?
- (9) would a warning on the packaging help? a parental lock?

In 1997, the full membership of the Video Appeals Committee was as follows:

President:

John Wood CB, former Deputy Director of Public Prosecution, former Director of the Serious Fraud Office, former Director of Public Prosecutions in Hong Kong

Members:

Nina Bawden FRSL JP, novelist; President, Society of Women Writers Journalists

Biddy Baxter, former producer of Children's Programmes, BBC Television; Editor of Blue Peter for 26 years; Consultant to the Director-General of the BBC since 1988.

Dr Philip Graham, Chair, National Children's Bureau; former Professor of Child Psychiatry, Institute of Child Health; former Consultant Psychiatrist, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children

Clive Hollins, forensic psychologist, Lecturer in Psychology, University of Leicester

Dr Neville March Hunnings, lawyer, author, editor Common Market Law Reports

The Hon Mrs Sara Morrison, Annan Committee and former director, Channel Four Television Co Ltd

Claire Rayner, author, journalist and broadcaster

Laurie Taylor, broadcaster and Professor of Sociology, York University

Fay Weldon, novelist and playwright

VIDEO CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL 1997

The Video Consultative Council is an advisory body set up in 1985 to monitor BBFC policy and practice from a nationwide perspective. Its tripartite structure includes representatives of the Local Authority Associations of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as representatives of the screen entertainment industry and individuals of personal distinction with relevant expertise. It is chaired by the President or Vice President of the BBFC.

During 1997, the major issues discussed by the Council were:

- (1) Media Education and the National Curriculum
- (2) Media Research and Consumer Research
- (3) BBFC Policy on Violence
- (4) Sex Shop tapes - the 'R18' category
- (5) Video Games, especially *Carmageddon*

Media Education and the National Curriculum

Having campaigned for the inclusion of media education in the National Curriculum, the VCC has a continuing interest in monitoring its progress, and the subject was raised at every Council meeting in 1997. The law now requires that pupils be introduced to a wide range of media and that they learn to evaluate and analyse them at primary and secondary school levels. The Board believes strongly in teaching children critical viewing skills, which are vital in ensuring that they understand not only the pleasures offered by the media, but also the risks that accompany those pleasures.

The Council discussed the Devon primary school curriculum, which explores children's understanding of reality and draws attention to the way in which films are made. The idea of teaching children that media products are not real but a construct was a useful way of developing their critical faculties, particularly with regard to media violence, and the BBFC Director had already described this project to a media forum organised by the Prince's Trust.

The positive value of media-relevant cultural events was discussed, like the modern-dress film of *Romeo and Juliet* or the dramatised version of *Popcorn* by Ben Elton, which tackles the links between media violence and real violence. The main concerns of the VCC were reiterated, namely education about the nature of the media through its deconstruction and the development of an appropriate media language.

There were reports on the BBFC's involvement in National Schools Film Week, an annual event that promotes film to both primary and secondary children. The BBFC had organised nine workshops around the country on censorship, classification and media violence. The Board's student pack had been distributed to participants, with briefing notes for teachers, and films were shown that raised relevant classification issues. The views of younger video viewers were canvassed through school visits in which BBFC examiners talked to young people about their viewing, and examiners had also contributed to teacher training events.

Michael Marland and James Ferman had been invited to sit on a sub-committee of the School Curriculum Assessment Authority (SCAA) concerned with moral education and made a plea for the uses of media in that context. An enquiry was made by the Education Sub-Committee of the VCC into developments in media education for primary schools, and they engaged the services of a former schools inspector to assess the extent to which the National Curriculum provisions were

being enforced. They found that less than half the OFSTED reports on secondary schools assessed the quality of media education, while few inspections of primary schools even mentioned the subject. The Council asked SCAA to require more emphasis on media education, and drew the attention of the Chief Inspector of Schools to the failure of inspectors to report on this section of the curriculum. The Council also agreed to co-fund a six-month audit of media education by the British Film Institute to find out how schools were interpreting the requirements of the National Curriculum on media studies, including resource and time allocation and teacher training.

Media Research & Consumer Research

Dr Kevin Browne reported on his research project on video violence and explained the hypothesis that people from disturbed and violent backgrounds would be more influenced by film violence than those from non-violent backgrounds. A leaked 'Home Office report' had been invented by the media, which had to be strenuously corrected, an experience that had provided him with a salutary lesson in media studies. The report would be published in full in 1998, and the BBFC's active participation in planning and commissioning the research would be made clear in the press treatment of it (see Research).

Children's actual understanding of the difference between fiction and reality had been illustrated by a test screening of *The Lost World - Jurassic Park*, which was discussed by the Council. This was seen by 478 primary school children, all of whom understood that dinosaurs were unreal. The teachers who accompanied them were asked to do a follow-up assessment of the children who had attended, and none reported any adverse effects. The children had reacted very strongly to scenes of animals being hurt in the film, with the shooting of the baby dinosaurs by the hunters proving to be the most distressing scene of all, while the most enthusiastic response was to a scene in which a child gymnast repelled an attack by a velociraptor by kicking it out of the cabin.

The Council discussed initiatives to get consumer feedback on the retail and rental markets through reply-paid Consumer Response Cards which had been put into two chains of video shops and through the use of space and a reply coupon in a mail-order magazine. The cooperation of the industry was appreciated. The Council also expressed its satisfaction at the results of the BVA's market research into the response of video customers to the first full year in which major distributors were all carrying Video Consumer Advice. The response was on the whole very favourable.

BBFC Policy on Violence

The VCC considered the question of video violence at more than one meeting, with particular reference to the V-chip and changing technology such as digital television and satellite, and the growing difficulty in regulating these technologies. There was an increasing gap between the way in which terrestrial and non-terrestrial broadcasters handled scheduling. The proliferation of transmission media together with existing media such as film and video meant it was very difficult for parents to control what their children saw. As for responsibilities towards the public, the Board was a public service organisation, which operated within certain limits. Censorship could cut gratuitous acts of violence and moderate the impression of violence in individual films, but it could not change the culture of violence which seemed to have pervaded Hollywood in the '90s. If film companies preferred stories where violence was met with violence and where the requirements of justice played little part in the retribution meted out by the hero, then this was difficult to counter by cuts or banning. Nevertheless, the BBFC was still cutting violence, especially for the '15' category, with Schwarzenegger's action thriller *Eraser* the prime example.

Sex Shop Tapes – The 'R18' Category

The problem of licensed and unlicensed shops was discussed several times during the year, with particular reference to the dwindling supply of licensed premises into which pornography could be segregated, with none at all in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and very few in the North of England. Most cuts in sex videos were to avoid a category with so few legitimate outlets. The Board had experimented during the year with a liberalisation of standards, judging 'R18' material on the basis of three criteria: that the sex must be consenting, non-violent, and legal. Attitudes in the '90s had relaxed, but, unfortunately, the sex shop category would not be commercially viable until more councils were prepared to license such shops.

Members of the VCC had supported the Board's view that segregating pornography into special shops was sensible, but it now seemed that the 'R18' was unlikely to work under the present legal constraints. The BBFC had supported the Westminster Bill, since this would close down the black market and enable the Board to ban the combination of sex and violence, but this meant that the consenting sex in licensed shops needed to be sufficiently explicit to attract the customers. The alternative was the current self-defeating practice of cutting the sex content down to '18' for ordinary shops where it risked being drawn to the attention of teenagers.

At the final meeting of 1997, the Board announced the end of the brief experiment in liberalising the 'R18' and the start of talks with the Crown Prosecution Service, the police and Customs and Excise to achieve common standards.

Video Games

The video game *Carmageddon* was discussed by the VCC on three occasions: after its rejection by the Board, after the appeal against that rejection to the Video Appeals Committee, and after the publication of the Committee's written decision to grant the appeal for an '18' certificate. The BBFC had rejected the original game in which points were scored by running down pedestrians and animals, and the company had at first suggested an alternative version in which the hit-and-run victims were zombies who threatened the world. This was a promising option but, in the Board's view, the company had left insufficient time to create a version that was sufficiently different from the original to meet BBFC concerns about gross violence to humans and animals. The distributor decided to risk releasing the zombie version with a voluntary rating on the grounds that violence to zombies could not be described as violence to humans or animals. The Board's rejection of the original game was then appealed to the Video Appeals Committee and the appeal was granted on a split decision, with the result that an '18' certificate was finally issued to the full version of the game. The issues are summarised in the previous section on appeals.

The VCC discussions were wide-ranging. The Video Standards Council challenged the BBFC view of both the game and the classification process and identified the game as having an appeal to the dedicated games player. There was the potential confusion of different versions of the game being available, especially since there were also different European versions, any of which could be imported. Both offered points and additional racing time for running over a pedestrian or a cow and for damaging other cars, and both versions had the option of placing the game player directly behind the wheel, thus giving the killer's point of view. The significant differences were that the zombie version replaced the red blood with green gunge and introduced into the Player's Manual a narrative of life-threatening zombies to motivate the game play and the player's 'drive to survive'. The BBFC had asked that this narrative run through all levels of the game to justify the killings, and wanted the packaging and press releases to reflect the importance of the narrative, but the company had said there was insufficient time to programme the requested changes.

VCC opinion on the potential impact of the game was divided. Although the zombie version seemed relatively slow and unrealistic, it would set a precedent for future games, since upgrades might present figures that were closer to real people. The game appeared to generate considerable excitement, and there was some concern that it could encourage road rage. The positioning and viewpoint of the player as killer was identified as intrinsically immoral. Press coverage had focused on these worrying elements and identified the narrative of the second version as 'spurious'. A Home Office representative expressed disappointment at the company's decision to release the game without a BBFC classification, and concern was expressed that the bypassing of the BBFC might set a precedent for the rest of the industry.

Others thought the game was harmless, and far less worrying than feature films. A gender split was identified in the Council, confirming that the dominant market for video games was male. It was argued that this game would be no more realistic to players than dinosaurs were to children. Different versions of the game were described, e.g. the German version had no blood at all due to German law. There was general agreement that producers of such material should contact the BBFC in the early stages of the product's development, given that programme modifications on games take longer than video cuts.

For the Video Standards Council, Laurie Hall argued that the decision had no relevance to the issue of exemption. ELSPA would continue to err on the side of caution, and would recommend submission to the BBFC of any game that gave rise to public concern. The Board had shown the Appeals Committee and the VCC a video demonstration of a series of hit-and-run killings from the game, all shot as if through the windscreen from the driver's point of view, but he asked whether this concentration on killing had reflected the experience of playing the game. The appellant had conceded that the game could be won by 'killing pedestrians' but had argued that this was not its main purpose, since it was primarily a racing game and demolition derby. The existence of a 'splat pack' was cited, which could open up concealed images of blood and gore in the unclassified zombie version of the game. Concern was expressed about under-age children as viewers, the realism of the deaths, the risks of desensitisation and imitation, and possible links between this game and the behaviour of young joy-riders. The fact that the game had been passed without problems in other countries was stressed, as was the difference between game playing and video viewing. The advantages and disadvantages of including a warning on the packaging were discussed, with some members wary that this might sensationalise the game. At the hearing, the company had offered to put a parental lock on the game, and the appeals panel had accepted that offer and made it a condition.

Despite the misgivings expressed by the Council, the BBFC had been obliged to accept the decision of the Video Appeals Committee. More research was needed, particularly on how parents monitored their children's viewing and purchasing of games. The terms of reference of the VCC include exploring the rulings of the Appeals Committee as laying down precedents for future policy. In the case of this appeal, it was clear that the Council overwhelmingly supported the minority view of the Appeals Committee and would have preferred the game not to have received a BBFC classification. Two questions remained: how should we draw the line on violence in video games, and how should the BBFC re-orient its policies to take on board the Appeals Committee's decision?

The other judgment delivered by the Video Appeal Committee was on the Board's rejection of *Boy Meets Girl*, 90% of which was set in a torture chamber in which two women torture a man to death. This, too, was a split decision, but here it was in the Board's favour, and the appeal was dismissed. Members of the VCC observed that, if the gender roles had been reversed and the torture victim female, the film would have been an automatic reject. Again, the written decision set out both the majority and minority views of the appeals panel, and in this case, Council

members found the majority view persuasive. It was noted that, since the issue here was the imposition of stricter standards for video than for cinema under the terms of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the decision was likely to become a precedent.

Apart from the principal officers of the BBFC, the membership of the Video Consultative Council during 1997 was as follows:

Sheila Abrahams, Justice of the Peace
Cllr J H Allen, Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland (ALANI)
Cllr P J Bayliss, Association of District Councils
Floella Benjamin, Actress and Broadcaster
Gill Bennet, Teacher, former Chair, National Association for Pastoral Care in Education (NAPCE)
Cllr W Brogan, Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Dr Kevin Browne, Professor of Forensic and Family Psychology, University of Birmingham
Lavinia Carey, British Video Association (BVA)
June Dromgoole, Assistant Managing Director, BBC Network Television
Michelle Elliott, Child Psychologist, Director, Kidscape
Lesley Fromant, Independent Television Association
Dr Alan Gilmour CVO, CBE, former Director, NSPCC, Chairman of the Michael Sieff Foundation
Laurie Hall, Video Standards Council (VSC)
Cllr Lambert, Association of London Government (ALG)
Bob Lewis, British Association of Record Dealers (BARD)
Haydon Luke, Association of County Councils; Head of Roundwood Park School
Cllr Shona Main, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
Michael Marland, Head, North Westminster School
Cllr R Palmer, Association of District Councils
Peter Wilson, Psychotherapist; Director, Young Minds
John Woodward, Producers' Alliance Cinema and TV (PACT)

Observers

Lee Hughes, Home Office
Keith Hale, Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards (LACOTS)
Nick Hunt, Home Office
Bob Parkin, Home Office
Birol Mehmet, Home Office
Paul Stephenson, Scottish Home and Health



FINANCE AND FORWARD PLANNING

Profit and Loss Account

In 1997, the Board's turnover dropped below the previous year by 4.4%, while expenditure remained nearly as high as in 1996. Taking measures quickly to reduce expenditure in response to a drop in income is difficult in an organisation where 62% of the total costs are staff costs. Since it takes well over six months to recruit and train new examiners, the Board has tried to maintain a slight over-capacity in order to replace examiners leaving at the end of their five year contracts. Unfortunately, too much over-provision can have an impact on the profit and loss account when income from video submissions, digital media and the voluntary packaging review system all suffer a fall in the same year. To our surprise, the problem was reversed when a cautious decision was taken to curb expenditure at the end of 1997 just at the point when the level of submissions turned round. With no warning at all, video throughput has risen by 20% since the end of 1997, with the result that a much larger number of new examiners had to be recruited than planned, and the final phase of the building programme had to be taken off hold in order to provide additional office accommodation with the least possible delay. The most predictable aspect of the video industry has always, in the Board's experience, been its unpredictability.

Income from film remains remarkably healthy, as the revival of cinema continues through the '90s, but film submissions represent only 15% of the Board's income. It is video demand which governs the size of BBFC operations, with the result that the decline in video submissions in 1997 resulted in a fall in profit from 4.8% of income to only 1.3%, reflecting a squeeze on margins caused partially by the fact that the Board's video tariff had remained unchanged for a number of years.

Cash Flows

Operating cash flow was £K125 in 1997, of which £K104 was invested in capital equipment consisting of enhancements and modifications to the Computer Information System, hardware to run the Board's new web site, presentation equipment, and the upgrading of a number of PCs. After adjustment for taxation and return on investments, the Board had a net inflow of funds of £K9.

Forward Planning

In 1998 the Board plans to increase its spending on public relations in order to meet the need for greater transparency and accountability and to increase further its dialogue with the public. The costs of taking the BBFC on the road to meet the public and hear their views are not insignificant. To these must be added the costs of seeking the views of outside professionals to feed into the Board's decision-making process and the costs of defending the Board's decisions when these are challenged. As material becomes more controversial, these costs will continue to rise. There will also be additional training costs for new examiners to replace those whose contracts will be ending in 1999.

After absorbing rises in costs for a number of years, the Board's forecast for 1998 indicated that, unless an increase in fees was sought, the Board would sustain a deficit in 1998 and 1999. In view of this, the Home Office gave permission for the Board to increase its video tariff with effect from 1st April 1998 in order that it could at least break even, as it is required to do under the Video Recordings Act 1984. In future the Board plans to review its tariffs on an annual basis with a target of maintaining minimum reserves equivalent to four months' expenditure.

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

President

Lord Harewood - Retired 18th February 1998
A. Whittam Smith - Appointed 1st January 1998

Vice Presidents

Lord Birkett - Retired 18th February 1998
Monica Sims, OBE

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT

Chairman	-	D.J. Kimbley
Vice Chairman	-	J.B. Smith
Hon. Treasurer	-	J.R. Millard

D.C. Calder
W.T. McMahon
M.W. Samuelson CBE

M.H. Cox
E.J. Needham

J.C. Holton
P.P. Rigby CBE., JP
J.F.G. Wilson

Director and Secretary

J.A. Ferman

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

Principal activities and business review

The company, which is limited by guarantee, is responsible for the classification of cinema films, and, in accordance with the terms of the Video Recordings Act 1984, for the classification of video works. Its revenue is derived from fees charged to distributors for the classification of their product.

The company's turnover over the previous year decreased by 4.4%. The Council of Management do not believe this decrease to be significant and the balance sheet remains sound. The results for the first quarter of 1998 are in line with forecast.

Council

Mr. H. Manley resigned on 24th July 1997. The members of the Council are shown above and all of them held office throughout the year except Mr. E.J. Needham who was appointed on 23rd October 1997. All voting members of the Council of Management retire in accordance with the Articles of Association and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

Members of the Council's responsibilities

Company law requires the members of the Council to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing those accounts, the members are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts; and
- Prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

(continued)

The members of the Council are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and which enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 1985. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Corporate Governance

The Council of Management continues to give careful consideration to, and has adopted the main principles of, corporate governance as set out in the Code of Best Practice of the Committee of the Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance (the Cadbury Report). However it is the opinion of the Council that not all the provisions of the Cadbury Report are appropriate for a company of the size and structure of The British Board of Film Classification.

Transfers to reserves

The retained profit for the year of £58,446 has been transferred to reserves.

Fixed assets

Information relating to changes in the tangible fixed assets is given in note 7 to the accounts.

Donations

During the year the company made charitable donations totalling £4,399.

Auditors

A resolution to re-appoint Messrs. W.H. Payne & Co. as auditors of the company will be submitted to the annual general meeting.

BY ORDER OF THE COUNCIL

James Ferman
Director and Secretary

AUDITORS' REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

We have audited the accounts on pages 53 to 61 which have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out on page 56.

Respective responsibilities of the members of the Council and auditors

As described on page 50, the members of Council are responsible for the preparation of accounts. It is our responsibility to form an independent opinion, based on our audit, on those accounts and to report our opinion to you.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the accounts. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the members of Council in the preparation of the accounts, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the company's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the accounts are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the accounts.

Opinion

In our opinion the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs at 31st December 1997 and of its profit for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985.

W.H. Payne & Co.
Chartered Accountants
and Registered Auditor,
Sandringham House,
199 Southwark Bridge Road,
London, SE1 0HA.

7th April 1998

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

	Note	1997	1996
Turnover	(2)	2,543,681	2,660,829
Operating costs		<u>(2,510,297)</u>	<u>(2,533,791)</u>
Operating profit		33,384	127,038
Interest receivable and similar income	(3)	<u>70,930</u>	<u>76,196</u>
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation	(5)	104,314	203,234
Tax on profit on ordinary activities	(6)	<u>(45,868)</u>	<u>(74,243)</u>
Retained profit for year		58,446	128,991
Retained profit at beginning of year		<u>815,974</u>	<u>686,983</u>
Retained profit at end of year		<u>£874,420</u>	<u>£815,974</u>

Continuing operations

None of the company's activities were acquired or discontinued during the above two financial years.

Total recognised gains and losses

The company has no recognised gains or losses other than the profit or loss for the above two financial years.

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this profit and loss account.

BALANCE SHEET 31ST DECEMBER 1997

	Note	1997	1996
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	(7)	<u>210,230</u>	<u>310,058</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	(8)	362,090	300,843
Investments	(9)	718,441	607,496
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>416,273</u>	<u>510,936</u>
		1,496,804	1,419,275
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(10)	<u>(474,170)</u>	<u>(659,965)</u>
Net current assets		<u>1,022,634</u>	<u>759,310</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		1,232,864	1,069,368
Provisions for liabilities and charges	(11)	<u>(335,193)</u>	<u>(230,143)</u>
Net assets		<u>£897,671</u>	<u>£839,225</u>
Capital and reserves			
Capital reserve	(12)	23,251	23,251
Profit and loss account		<u>874,420</u>	<u>815,974</u>
Accumulated funds	(13)	<u>£897,671</u>	<u>£839,225</u>

Approved by the Council of Management on 7th April 1998

.....
D.J. Kimbley – Chairman

.....
J.R. Millard – Hon. Treasurer

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this balance sheet.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

	1997	1996
Reconciliation of operating profit to net cash flow from operating activities		
Operating profit	33,384	127,038
Depreciation charges	209,961	268,675
Profit on sale of tangible fixed assets	(910)	(667)
(Profit)/loss on sale of current investments	(6,668)	1,269
Increase in provisions for liabilities and charges	105,050	98,143
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(59,048)	51,605
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(156,772)	127,560
	<u>£124,997</u>	<u>£673,623</u>
<hr/>		
Cash flow statement	1997	1996
Net cash inflow from operating activities	124,997	673,623
Return on investments and servicing of finance (note 14a)	68,731	76,196
Taxation	(74,890)	(140,148)
Capital expenditure (note 14b)	(109,223)	(465,723)
	<u>9,615</u>	<u>143,948</u>
Management of liquid resources (note 14c)	(104,278)	(114,135)
	<u>£(94,663)</u>	<u>£29,813</u>
<hr/>		
Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net funds (note 14d)	1997	1996
(Decrease)/increase in cash in the year	(94,663)	29,813
Movement in liquid resources	110,945	112,866
	<u>16,282</u>	<u>142,679</u>
Change in net funds	16,282	142,679
Net funds at beginning of year	1,118,432	975,753
	<u>£1,134,714</u>	<u>£1,118,432</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this cash flow statement.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

1. Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies, which have been consistently applied are:-

(a) Basis of accounting

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with applicable accounting standards.

(b) Tangible fixed assets

Fixed assets are stated at original cost. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write-off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset on a straight line basis over its estimated useful life as follows:-

Moveable furniture, equipment and motor vehicles	25% per annum
Computer equipment	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % per annum

Expenditure on leasehold property and immovable furniture and equipment are written off as incurred.

(c) Current asset investments

Current asset investments are stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

(d) 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.

(e) Turnover

Turnover comprises the value of sales (excluding VAT) of services supplied in the normal course of business.

(f) Leased assets

Rentals applicable to operating leases are recognised in the profit and loss account as incurred.

(g) Pensions

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme to provide retirement benefits for its staff. The amount charged to profit and loss account in respect of pension costs are the contributions payable in the year.

2. Turnover

The turnover and operating profit are attributable to the principal activity of the company.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

3. Interest receivable and similar income	1997	1996
Bank deposit interest	31,489	29,013
Income from current asset investments	33,279	29,774
Other income	6,162	17,409
	<u>£70,930</u>	<u>£76,196</u>

4. Employees	1997	1996
Average monthly number of people employed by the company during the year:-		
Management	8	8
Administration	13	13
Examination	13	14
Technical	5	5
Registration	5	5
Programming	3	3
Accommodation	2	2
Casual	2	-
	<u>51</u>	<u>50</u>

Costs in respect of these employees:

Salaries	1,238,609	1,208,874
Social security costs	116,908	105,687
Pensions	170,567	222,169
Life assurances	6,862	5,734
	<u>£1,532,946</u>	<u>£1,542,464</u>

Council of Management remuneration:

A member of the Council received the following remuneration:

Emoluments	<u>£2,500</u>	<u>£-</u>
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

	1997	1996		
5. Profit on ordinary activities before taxation				
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation is arrived at, after charging:-	£	£		
Depreciation and amounts written off:				
- tangible fixed assets	209,961	268,675		
Staff costs	1,532,946	1,542,464		
Auditors' remuneration	14,000	14,000		
Rental of equipment	3,851	4,931		
Rental of premises	185,000	185,000		
Exceptional items:				
Pension provision [note 15c(ii)]	67,930	44,444		
	<u>£45,868</u>	<u>£74,243</u>		
6. Tax on profit on ordinary activities	1997	1996		
The charge for the year comprises:-				
Corporation tax @ 21.7% (1996 - 24.5%)	42,328	71,487		
Adjustment to current taxation in respect of prior years	679	267		
Tax attributable to franked investment income	2,861	2,489		
	<u>£45,868</u>	<u>£74,243</u>		
7. Tangible fixed assets	Short Leasehold premises	Furniture and equipment	Motor car	Total
Cost				
At beginning of year	393,561	2,291,921	20,533	2,706,015
Additions	14,883	96,332	-	111,215
Disposals	-	(11,937)	-	(11,937)
At end of year	<u>408,444</u>	<u>2,376,316</u>	<u>20,533</u>	<u>2,805,293</u>
Depreciation				
At beginning of year	393,561	1,986,997	15,399	2,395,957
Charge for the year	14,883	189,945	5,133	209,961
Disposals	-	(10,855)	-	(10,855)
At end of year	<u>408,444</u>	<u>2,166,087</u>	<u>20,532</u>	<u>2,595,063</u>
Net book value				
At end of year	<u>£-</u>	<u>£210,229</u>	<u>£1</u>	<u>£210,230</u>
At beginning of year	<u>£-</u>	<u>£304,924</u>	<u>£5,134</u>	<u>£310,058</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

8. Debtors	1997	1996
Trade debtors	261,969	219,109
Others	16,324	18,371
Prepayments and accrued income	83,797	63,363
	<u>£362,090</u>	<u>£300,843</u>

9. Current asset investments	1997	1996
Listed		
UK government securities	226,194	226,194
Other UK investments	492,247	381,302
	<u>£718,441</u>	<u>£607,496</u>
Market value of listed investments	<u>£846,995</u>	<u>£664,009</u>
Tax liability if listed investments were sold at market value	<u>£21,000</u>	<u>£10,000</u>

10. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	1997	1996
Trade creditors	69,955	49,379
Corporation tax	38,896	67,919
Other taxation and Social security costs	101,002	121,686
Other creditors	196,133	393,885
Accruals and deferred income	68,184	27,096
	<u>£474,170</u>	<u>£659,965</u>

11. Provisions for liabilities and charges	1997			
	Leasehold property dilapidations	Pension scheme	Legal fees	Total
At beginning of year	65,600	119,444	45,099	230,143
Charged to profit and loss account	37,120	67,930	-	105,050
At end of year	<u>£102,720</u>	<u>£187,374</u>	<u>£45,099</u>	<u>£335,193</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED) **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997**

11. Provisions for liabilities and charges-(continued)	1996			
	Leasehold property dilapidations	Pension scheme	Legal fees	Total
At beginning of year	32,000	75,000	25,000	132,000
Charged to profit and loss account	33,600	44,444	20,099	98,143
At end of year	<u>£65,600</u>	<u>£119,444</u>	<u>£45,099</u>	<u>£230,143</u>
12. Capital reserve	1997			1996
At beginning and end of year	<u>£23,251</u>			<u>£23,251</u>
The capital reserve represents surpluses realised on sales of fixed assets prior to 1984.				
13. Reconciliation of movements on accumulated funds	1997			1996
Profit for the financial year after taxation	58,446			128,991
Accumulated funds at beginning of year	839,225			710,234
Accumulated funds at end of year	<u>£897,671</u>			<u>£839,225</u>
14. Cash flow statement	1997			1996
(a) Return on investments and servicing of finance				
Interest received	29,290			29,013
Income from current asset investments	33,279			29,774
Other income	6,162			17,409
	<u>£68,731</u>			<u>£76,196</u>
(b) Capital expenditure				
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	(111,215)			(466,998)
Receipts from sale of tangible fixed assets	1,992			1,275
	<u>£(109,223)</u>			<u>£(465,723)</u>
(c) Management of liquid resources				
Purchase of current asset investments	(188,514)			(168,248)
Sale of current asset investments	84,236			54,113
	<u>£(104,278)</u>			<u>£(114,135)</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

14. Cash flow statement (continued)

(d) Analysis of change in net funds	At beginning of year	Cash flows	Other non-cash changes	At end of year
Cash at bank and in hand	510,936	(94,663)	-	416,273
Current asset investments	607,496	104,278	6,667	718,441
	<u>£1,118,432</u>	<u>£9,615</u>	<u>£6,667</u>	<u>£1,134,714</u>

15. Guarantees and other financial commitments

(a) Capital commitments	1997	1996
At the year end capital commitments were:-		
Contracted for but not provided for in the accounts	<u>£-</u>	<u>£-</u>
Authorised by the Council of Management but not contracted for	<u>£210,000</u>	<u>£420,000</u>

(b) Operating lease commitments

The minimum annual rental on property held under operating lease was as follows:-
Lease which expires:

	1997 Property	1996 Property
After 5 years	<u>£185,000</u>	<u>£185,000</u>

(c) Pension arrangements

- (i) The company operates a defined contribution scheme to provide retirement benefits for staff. During June 1997 Legal General Group Plc. was replaced by Standard Life Assurance Company to manage the personal pension scheme.
- (ii) On 1st December 1991, the company changed the scheme managers and entered into guarantees under which any employee retiring before 30th November 2001 could not be worse off by reason of the change. Included in provision for liabilities and charges is £119,444 brought forward and £67,930 provided during the current year to cover for any potential shortfall suffered by these employees.
- (iii) The company also contributes towards personal pension and life assurance schemes of certain employees who have short term contracts of employment. The company's contributions represent a fixed percentage of remuneration.
- (iv) The total pension cost charge for the year including outstanding contributions of £25,979 was £99,487 (1996 - £177,726 including outstanding contributions £1,750).

APPENDICES

BBFC Draft Guidelines for Classifying Films and Videos

BBFC
British Board of Film Classification

From the feedback we receive and our own market research, it is clear that most BBFC decisions about film and video classification are understood and appreciated by the viewing public.

In order to become a more open and accountable public body, we have begun a nationwide process of consultation and public debate. As part of that continuing process, we are publishing these draft guidelines to set out the legal framework and principles underlying our work.

These guidelines are from time to time subject to review and will be amended by the Board as required.

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INTRODUCTION

British Board of Film Classification

At the BBFC, we classify films, videos and digital games. We are an independent, non-governmental body, and we fund ourselves through the fees we charge for examining screen entertainment. We get no other funding from the film industry or the government.

The Legal Framework

We operate under the following Acts of Parliament.

- 1 **The Cinemas Act**
Under this Act, we have been classifying films since 1913 on behalf of the local authorities who license cinemas.
- 2 **The Video Recordings Act**
Under this Act, we were designated by the Home Secretary in 1985 as the classification authority for videos.

Under these two Acts, we are accountable to the public, to Parliament, and to central and local government for deciding the suitability of films or videos for classification. (Television has its own system of regulation.)

The Criminal Law

We must also apply the Criminal Law, making sure that none of the Acts below are broken.

The Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act 1937

This Act makes it illegal to show any scene if animals were treated cruelly in the making of that scene (meaning what really happened to an animal during the film-making, not what appears to be happening on screen).

The Protection of Children Act 1978

This Act makes it a crime to produce or publish indecent photographs of a child (meaning a person under the age of 16).

The Obscene Publications Acts 1959 and 1964

We must avoid classifying screen entertainment which is 'obscene'. A film or video is legally obscene if, when taken as a whole, it has a tendency to deprave and corrupt a significant proportion of those who are likely to see it. (Deprave and corrupt means to make morally bad.)

Little known aspects of the law (like blasphemy, libel and incitement to racial hatred) are still live issues in the UK. The Board's recent decision to reject a video on grounds of blasphemy was confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights.

The European Convention on Human Rights is currently being made part of British law. Article 10 guarantees the right to freedom of expression. It also specifies that:

'The exercise of these freedoms ... may be subject to such restrictions ... as are necessary for ... [among other things] ... the prevention of disorder or crime [or] the protection of health or morals.'

If we cut or reject a film or video, we must always justify our decision by referring to this test.

Principles of Classification Policy

Apart from the above, the law did not lay down any principles on which to base a classification system. So we had to formulate our own basic principles. The principles we follow must be

- reasonable,
- consistent with the broad intentions of Parliament, and
- in line with the Freedom of Expression provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The basic principles of our classification policy are as follows.

- Any film or video should be allowed to reach the widest audience that is appropriate for its theme and treatment, but
- Children and young people should be protected from material likely to harm them.
- Adults should be free to decide what film or video they want to see, as long as it remains within the law and does not encourage harm to others.
- Classification decisions should take account of current public attitudes and relevant research (which means we must keep in touch with public attitudes and research)
- We must always maintain a balance between freedom and responsibility, balancing the rights of the robust majority against the needs of the vulnerable minority.
- We must be accountable for every decision we make.

Research and Media Education

We often base our decisions on research and so maintain close links with researchers throughout the world. Our consultants in the UK include teachers, psychologists, lawyers, criminologists, magistrates, child psychiatrists, and animal welfare experts. We have our own research programme, under which we commission:

- audience research of the video-viewing public;
- research into British social attitudes on media issues; and
- research into the effects of screen violence on young offenders and other vulnerable teenagers.

We also send the Board's examiners into schools to teach classification issues and discuss them with students and teachers.

The Work of the Board

All films shown commercially in Britain and nearly all videos sold or hired in shops must be classified by the BBFC. On average, we process 3000 to 4000 films, videos, and digital games every year. The President and Vice Presidents are responsible for BBFC policy. The day-to-day work of classification is carried out by BBFC examiners, who are chosen from a wide range of backgrounds. Their decision-making is supervised by the Principal Examiner. The Director and Deputy Director are in charge of running of Board and must approve all classification decisions.

CLASSIFICATION POLICY

Classification policy evolved in the form of guidelines rather than rules. They had to, since not only do films change from decade to decade, but the way we view them changes. More films are seen in the home now than in the cinema, both on video and on TV. And our classification policy goes on developing in response to changes in public taste, attitudes and concerns.

Earlier category decisions are relevant, because they set public expectations. Through precedents, people get to know the kind of films they are likely to find in a category, and they have a right to expect similar standards in future.

Context is also important. Violence, for example, may be more acceptable in one film than in another. No two films are identical, even in the same genre, and classification must be based on **principles**, on **precedent**, and on the **context** of the particular film.

The Categories

Under the British category system, films or videos are given one of the following 7 certificates.

- 'U', 'Uc', and 'PG' - these are advisory classifications.
- '12', '15', and '18' - these are legally restricted by age.
- 'R18' - this is the most restricted classification and is limited by age and legal access.

There is no official category for films or videos that are refused a certificate.

Examining Practice

Examiners work in teams of two. If a film raises difficult issues, more examiners will see it, in some cases all of them. When they watch a film, they must take detailed notes and write a full report, noting:

- The type of film it is: the story, characters, treatment (in terms of violence or sex), the language (sometimes it is in a foreign language, and we have examiners who are fluent in one or more of the Indian or Chinese languages).
- The age group most likely to see it.
- How suitable it is for the various age groups.
- The standards of morality and decency portrayed.
- The artistic or educational merit of the film.
- The certificate given to similar films in the past.

When classifying films and videos, we must balance all these factors. But above all, examiners must assess two overriding aspects of the film:

- its harmful effects, if any; and
- its potential level of offensiveness.

Either of these aspects may have a major impact on the certificate given.

Offensiveness

Whether something is offensive often depends on what is appropriate at a particular time or place. For example, many families prefer there to be no bad language in the home, or in front of children. Different standards may apply in the workplace. Nudity is considered inappropriate in public, though each household decides what is acceptable in the home.

Offensiveness is a question of manners and may change from one generation to the next. For those who resist such changes, the behaviour of others can be distressing. We try to minimise offensiveness by grading and labelling films in a way that indicates the behaviour and language likely to be encountered.

Above all, parents should be able to control the things their children see and hear. The category system enables parents to take some responsibility for their children's viewing. It also makes sure that children will be refused access to any film or video which is seriously unsuitable for them.

Harm

The possibility of harm is our main concern. Parents want us to help them regulate their children's viewing. Parliament wants us to protect teenagers from anti-social influence. The Video Recordings Act, as amended, singles out the following elements as being potentially harmful.

- Criminal behaviour
- The use of illegal drugs
- Violent behaviour or incidents
- Horrific behaviour or incidents
- Human sexual activity

Any combination of these elements would also be seen as potentially harmful. One such combination is sexual violence, perhaps the most disturbing and potentially harmful of all.

The Board must examine each of these elements to decide whether they are handled responsibly or irresponsibly. Under the Video Recordings Act, two kinds of harm must be considered:

- harm to those likely to view the video; and
- harm to society through the behaviour of those viewers afterwards.

Our assessment of harm is often the subject of fierce debate, both within the BBFC and in society. Films and videos have made an important contribution to 20th century culture, and any restrictions we place on film-makers must be justified. We should avoid censorship where possible, which means that classification should be our first option, particularly when protecting children from fear or distress.

If the harm in question is the influence a work may have on teenagers, then we must decide whether giving the film or video an '18' certificate will prevent those teenagers from seeing it. If not, then the film or video will need to be cut.

We will only ban a film or video as a last resort, but sometimes the risk is so great that we have no option but to refuse to give a certificate.

BBFC policy on harm may be clarified by turning to each of the elements cited above.

Criminal Behaviour

Teaching criminal techniques can lead to copycat crime, so we try to reduce the step-by-step process of 'breaking and entering' buildings or stealing cars, particularly in the teenage categories. Techniques of picking locks, levering car doors open or 'hot-wiring' ignition systems are often cut, particularly on video where the technique can be watched again and again until the lesson is learned.

We are also cautious about the demonstration of imitable combat techniques, including the use of weapons which are easy to make and conceal. The Chinese flail (known as chainsticks or *nunchaku*) and sharpened metal throwing stars, introduced to the West in kung fu and ninja movies, have often been copied by aggressive teenagers. Their use is now restricted in Britain, on film and on the streets.

Combat knives have recently been a problem in Britain, and carrying such a knife is now illegal. On the screen, therefore, glamorising knives has become an issue, and we limit their use by action heroes if we think the behaviour is likely to be copied. The photogenic twirling and flicking of butterfly knives is actively discouraged in films and videos, since they have little use other than as an offensive weapon.

Unarmed combat techniques are removed if copying those techniques could cause serious injury. Thus double ear-claps, which can burst the ear drums, are regularly cut, particularly in the junior categories. So are head butts, neck breaks and potentially lethal blows to the front or back of the neck.

Films that glamorise crime or celebrate criminal lifestyles are classified in the higher categories. We always try to make sure that no film or video encourages anti-social behaviour amongst those likely to watch it.

Use of Illegal Drugs

The Board is vigilant about depictions of illegal drug use, particularly on video where the step-by-step techniques of preparing and using hard drugs can be learned through repetition. We are also cautious about scenes in which a character recommends illegal drug-taking, unless that scene is contradicted by the film as a whole.

We have always taken a strict view of films which promote drug-taking by glamorising the drug taker or the ritualistic process of injecting. Such scenes often result in cuts, even with an '18' certificate. We are also cautious about associating drugs with sexual excitement, as this can reinforce the message that drugs are pleasurable.

The combination of drugs and driving can be problematic, though it may be shown as an example of irresponsible behaviour.

In films or videos classified for children, drug use is only justifiable if it is shown briefly and with great restraint. It should never be condoned.

Violence

'Violence' is an imprecise term which covers a wide range of behaviour. It includes material as varied as 'Tom and Jerry' cartoons, wartime documentaries, and vividly simulated mutilations in horror films. Policy statements about media violence should be precise about the sort of violence being considered.

Public concern about violence in films tends to focus on the possibility that screen violence may promote violent behaviour in real life. This leads to the fear that violent behaviour will become anti-social behaviour. Through classification and censorship we try to moderate aggressive or anti-social influences.

Concerns include:

- making violence seem a normal or legitimate way of solving problems;
- celebrating heroes who inflict pain and injury, often more brutally than the villains;
- increasing callousness towards the victims of violence;
- teaching violent techniques;
- encouraging aggressive attitudes;
- promoting sadism as a source of pleasure.

The classification system allows us to ration the use of violence in films by grading its frequency, intensity, duration and detail throughout the category scale. Classification is concerned not only with aggressive acts, but also with the threat of violence and its results.

BBFC policy on violence is clear. Children must be protected from fear, and potential delinquents from anti-social influence. That does not mean protecting adults from fear, or from unpleasant facts about the world. Films that tell the truth about violence and the price of violence are given a clearer run than those which glorify it. On the other hand, realistic violence can be disturbing to children, and it is necessary to strike a balance. The problem is a difficult one: if we sanitise violence, we conceal its dangers, but if we emphasise those dangers, we can make people insecure. Children often enjoy the excitement of being frightened, but they must be given the chance to overcome those fears.

Research has shown that most young people do not tend to copy screen violence, but those who do include some of the most violent and potentially dangerous young people in Britain. Violent heroes can be a problem, and we are particularly cautious about heroic role models whose brutality or sadism is applauded by the film. We often require cuts to reduce the attractiveness of such behaviour, particularly on video, where such scenes can be played over and over again.

Cruelty to animals is particularly disturbing as it is usually really happening at the time of filming. There is a history of animal cruelty in entertainment, and in Britain it is a criminal offence to show scenes in the making of which captive or domestic animals were deliberately injured or goaded to fury or terror. So tripping horses into dangerous falls, or staging cockfights or bullfights for the camera are banned as inhumane. Context is no defence, and all such scenes are cut unless clearly simulated.

Horror

Horror films are mainly concerned with fear and terror, and have usually been restrictively classified in Britain to protect the young and vulnerable. Audiences like being scared, and horror films can provide the same sort of thrill as a roller-coaster ride. But for the young and vulnerable, there must be a safe and distancing element of make-believe.

In horror films, fear often springs from the threat of physical violence, and it is the violence rather than the fear that causes problems, particularly if the viewer is invited to take the side of the monster or villain. Such films become more acceptable if the viewer's sympathies are with the innocent hero or heroine who is trying, against all the odds, to escape the forces of evil, real or supernatural. Whether a film needs to be cut depends on the extent to which the film lures the viewer into identifying with the aggressor.

At the other end of the scale, some horror films are similar in quality to children's fairy tales. Our policy on horror is to classify its imaginative qualities at a level appropriate to the target audience, but to draw a very firm line when it comes to sadistic cruelty.

Sex

In recent decades, the British public has come to accept sexual images in screen entertainment, with the degree of explicitness graded through the category system. Where most people draw the line is at the combination of sex and violence. Above all, sex on the screen is expected to take place between consenting adults.

In films with an '18' certificate, simulated sex is now widely acceptable. Even at '15', some sex scenes are allowed, although it is usually sex within a relationship. Gay sex is less controversial than it was, and there has been a move towards equal treatment of heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

How explicit sexual scenes can be depends on the certificate the film or video is given. In Britain, Parliament decided to have two adult categories, the '18' (which can be supplied in all video stores) and the 'R18' (which can only be supplied in licensed sex shops which no one under 18 can enter). Scenes of real sex are usually given an 'R18' certificate which restricts them to sex shops, although where a 'public good' defence can be mounted, an exception may be made, as for instance with sex education videos, which may be given an '18'.

Like the '18', the 'R18' is limited to non-violent sex between consenting adults. The bounds of explicitness are those of the criminal law.

Sexual Violence

Sexually violent material is potentially harmful, particularly if it suggests that sexual assault may lead to sexual arousal. We have a strict policy on rape and sexual violence. Forcible stripping and exposing of breasts is disallowed if the assault is staged for the pleasure of the male viewer. We are stricter with such scenes on video than on film, since they could be played over and over in the privacy of the home and lead some viewers to find the use of force sexually arousing.

Sadistic material that involves mutilating or torturing naked women is banned. Sex where one person is forcibly restrained is also censored, and bondage or whipping are often cut. So, too, are sex scenes accompanied by pain or humiliation.

Children

It is illegal to trade in indecent photographs of children below the age of 16. The most serious of these offences are those involving actual sex acts with a child. Since children are too young to give meaningful consent, such scenes constitute a record of the sexual abuse of children and are properly banned by law. Simulated scenes of sexual intercourse with a person or between people who appear to be under 16 are also restricted.

Consumer Advice

BBFC research showed that the public wanted us to explain the reasons for each of our classification decisions. To meet that need, we have developed a system of consumer advice for videos and films. This aims to provide information about the theme and genre, and the frequency and intensity of violence, sex, nudity and bad language it contains. This is a first step in helping people make more informed choices about the films and videos they or their families want to see. The scheme is voluntary.

We also vet packaging for video cassettes on a voluntary basis and, in collaboration with the film industry, we check on the acceptability of cinema posters for '18' films.

Appeals

Any film or video company that disagrees with the Board's decision may appeal against it. In the case of films, the final appeal is to the local authority that licenses cinemas in a particular area. In the case of videos, there is a national Video Appeals Committee which is independent of the Board. Their decision is final.

THE CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

On the following pages there is a definition of each category together with a short description of what is allowed. This is followed by details about the range and limits of the material suitable for that category.

The guidelines are intended to be objective, fair, and flexible enough to cover all the factors previously mentioned. They must balance the rights of the film-maker and of the audience, and must acknowledge the unique character of each film and video.

In the end, classification is a matter of judgment, of balancing one factor against another. Sometimes, the various elements in the film may be pulling in different directions. Here experience is important, together with an awareness of public taste and tolerance. The guidelines provide a starting point, but context may justify exceptions, particularly in the case of comedy, since laughter has always been the most reliable lubricant of public taste.

'U' - UNIVERSAL Suitable for all

The 'U' certificate means that a film or video is suitable for the whole family, including children as young as four. Not all 'U' films will interest children, but none will be unsuitable for them.

No film or video classified 'U' will be harmful or disturbing, but it is impossible to predict what might upset a particular child. Thus parents should supervise very young children who are watching 'U' certificate videos and films they have not seen before.

Taken as a whole, children's films and videos classified 'U' will be wholesome entertainment.

Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of themes may feature in films or videos classified 'U'. • Sensitive or problematic themes will be treated in a way that makes them understandable, even to younger children.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On rare occasions, you might hear one of the mildest swearwords. • Only in exceptional circumstances will other mild swearwords be used, and the Consumer Advice will tell you this.
Nudity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be little or no nudity.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be no sexual behaviour or references.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be brief moments of fighting which will be balanced by reassuring sequences and storylines. • Threat or menace will be kept to a minimum. • There will be no focus on violence (physical or verbal) as a solution to problems. • There will be no focus on weapons unless in comic, historic or fantastic settings. • Special effects will be brief and not overwhelming, and sound effects will not be frightening in themselves.
Horror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be brief moments of mild horror in comic, historic or fantastic settings (for example, dragons, giants, wicked witches).

'Uc' - UNIVERSAL Particularly suitable for young children (Video only)

Videos with a 'Uc' certificate are particularly suitable for young, pre-school children to watch by themselves and will contain nothing which could be considered offensive by parents. (Examples of videos with a 'Uc' certificate are 'Teletubbies', 'Winnie the Pooh', and 'Mr Men'.)

Context may justify exceptions.

'PG' - PARENTAL GUIDANCE General viewing, but some scenes
may be unsuitable for young children

Unaccompanied children of any age may watch a 'PG' film or video, but parents are advised to monitor the contents. Some parents may watch the film or video first, or take advice from friends. Others may prefer to watch with their children.

'PG' films or videos may contain material which could confuse or upset younger viewers (especially if watched without adult guidance), but it should not contain anything likely to disturb or shock children over eight.

There may be mild violence or swearwords, some non-sexual nudity or implied sex. Viewed as a whole, the work will be suitable for most family audiences.

Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social problems like crime, divorce, racism, and serious illness may feature, but more disturbing adult issues will not.• Such themes should be treated in a reassuring way.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mild bad language may be used occasionally, but no strong swearwords will be used.
Nudity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There may be occasional nudity in a non-sexual context, but this should not be nudity for the sake of it.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sex may be suggested, but should be discreet and infrequent.• There may be some mild sexual innuendo.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violence must be justified by the story, but more will be allowed in a historic setting or in a comedy or fantasy film.• There will be no emphasis on combat techniques or realistic weapons.
Horror	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exciting horror scenes may be allowed in a fantasy context, but there will be no prolonged focus on gory images or suffering.
Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There may be mild verbal or visual references to drugs, but these should not condone or encourage drug use.

Context may justify exceptions.

'12' - SUITABLE ONLY FOR PERSONS OF 12 YEARS AND OVER

The '12' certificate means that no one under 12 may see a '12' film in a cinema or buy or hire a '12' video from a shop.

Films or videos classified '12' contain material that may be disturbing or harmful to children under 12. There may be stronger or more detailed treatment of some of the elements listed below than would be allowed in a 'PG' film or video.

Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult themes may feature, but will be treated discreetly.• Difficult themes will have clear outcomes but may challenge young teenagers to consider moral and social issues.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There may be frequent use of mild or moderate swearwords.• Very rarely, there may be a sexual swearword.
Nudity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occasional nudity is acceptable.• Nudity in a sexual context will be brief and discreet.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual activity may be implied, but without any physical detail.• Sexual references may be stronger and less ambiguous than in 'PG' films and videos, especially in a comedy context.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violence may be shown more realistically, but will not be detailed.• Violence to individuals should be brief, especially in a realistic context.• There may be occasional gory moments.• Sexual violence may be implied or briefly indicated, but only when justified by the story.
Horror	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There may be occasional gory moments and some grotesque images, but these will not be detailed.
Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• References to drugs or images of drug-taking must be brief and should not promote or encourage drug use.

Context may justify exceptions.

'15' - SUITABLE ONLY FOR PERSONS OF 15 YEARS AND OVER

A '15' certificate means that no one under 15 may see a '15' film in a cinema or buy or hire a '15' video from a shop.

Films or videos classified '15' may require a more mature perspective than in the lower categories. Some material may be disturbing or potentially harmful to people under 15.

Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most themes are allowed.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual swearwords may be used, but very coarse or aggressive language will only be used occasionally.
Nudity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-frontal nudity may be shown, sometimes in a sexual context.• Close-up detail will be avoided.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual activity may be shown, but will not include intimate physical detail.• Sex scenes will be justified by context and will usually further plot, character or theme.• There may be strong sexual references.• Casual sex scenes will be brief, and sex will mainly illustrate developing relationships.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong violence may be shown if it furthers the narrative or illustrates dramatic themes or events.• If the violence itself is the primary source of entertainment, detail should be kept to a minimum and be balanced by other elements of storytelling such as character or plot.• Sexually violent images are allowed only if they are brief, isolated, and justified by context.
Horror	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gory or grotesque imagery may be more frequent or detailed, but will generally avoid prolonged focus.
Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drug use may be shown, but dwelling on instructive detail of the preparation or use of hard drugs is unacceptable.• Images of drugs should not glamorise or promote illegal drug use.

Context may justify exceptions.

'18' - SUITABLE ONLY FOR PERSONS OF 18 YEARS AND OVER

Films or videos with an '18' certificate may be shown, sold or rented only to people aged 18 or over. Material in this category is unsuitable for people under 18.

Material classified '18' may contain adult themes or treatment which requires an adult understanding. No subject matter is taboo at '18', but how the subject is treated may be limited if it could harm potential viewers or encourage them to behave in a way which could harm other members of society.

Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no taboo themes, provided the treatment is appropriate.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no limitations on the strength or frequency of swearwords or on the explicitness of sexual references.
Nudity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive full-frontal nudity is acceptable in a sexual context, as long as there is no undue focus on the genitals.
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenes of simulated sex are allowed, but sex scenes may be limited because of length or strength. • Images of real sex must be brief and justified by context.
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy and detailed scenes of violence are acceptable, as long as they are justified by their position in the film as a whole. • Detailed focus on violent acts may be unacceptable if it promotes violence or the use of illegal weapons. • Sexual violence may be implied and sometimes shown, as long as the scenes do not offer sexual thrills.
Horror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horrific themes, incidents and images are acceptable, as long as they do not breach standards on violence, sexual violence or sex.
Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug use may be shown in some detail, but there must be no clear instruction in how to use hard drugs. • Nor must the film as a whole promote or advocate the use of hard drugs.

SEX VIDEOS AT '18'

Material focusing on sexual activity alone may be given an '18' certificate with or without a narrative, and sexual activity may be realistically (but not explicitly) simulated. Mild fetishes may be represented, but all sex scenes should be non-violent and between consenting adults. Sex acts should involve no more than two adults. Nudity is unrestricted, but sight of erections or prolonged focus on the genitals is not permitted. Sexual language is acceptable, but verbal threats and humiliation are not.

SEX EDUCATION AT '18'

Where sex material genuinely seeks to inform and educate about human sexuality, explicit images of real sex may be briefly included. This sort of video is likely to feature qualified presenters and emphasis on health education and safer sex techniques. Even in this context, however, explicit detail must be kept to the minimum necessary to illustrate the educational or instructional points being made.

Context may justify exceptions.

'R18' - TO BE SUPPLIED ONLY IN LICENSED SEX SHOPS TO PERSONS OF NOT LESS THAN 18 YEARS

The 'R18' category is a special and legally restricted classification for videos where the focus is mainly on real sexual activity. Such videos can be supplied to adults only in licensed sex shops, of which there are about 60 in the UK. 'R18' videos may **not** be supplied by mail order.

The sex scenes in all 'R18' videos must be non-violent and between consenting adults. They must also be legal, both in the acts portrayed and in the degree of explicitness shown. There are no limits on length and strength apart from those of the criminal law. Group sex is allowed, and there is parity as between homosexual and heterosexual sex.

Erections may be shown, as may a broader range of mild fetish material, but no threats or humiliation or realistic depictions of pain are permitted.

There must be no explicit sight of penetration, oral, vaginal or anal. Ejaculation must not be shown.

Context may justify exceptions.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Context	The other parts or elements of a film or video that come before and after a particular incident and give it meaning. Context includes things like the story, characters, setting, and previous incidents, all of which explain the individual scenes.
Discreet	Restrained, modest, careful not to be offensive. In a film, it means the shots will probably be from a distance rather than close and will not linger on details.
Explicit	Clearly detailed; speaking out or showing things clearly; leaving nothing implied. In sex scenes, it usually means that the genital organs are visible.
Genre	Type or style of film, such as comedy, thriller, Western, romance, action-adventure.
Precedent	Previous films or videos of a similar nature which set a standard or pattern for future classification decisions.
Sadism	Cruelty for its own sake.
Sadistic	Cruel; taking pleasure in inflicting pain or injury on others, sometimes for sexual excitement.
Sanitise	To remove strong, disturbing or shocking images or words from a scene to make it more tasteful.
Simulated	Acted or pretended; presented as or appearing to be real.
Treatment	The way a theme or issue is handled on screen. It may include the overall style of the film, the degree of realism, the camera angles, or the actions of the characters.

BAD LANGUAGE

We maintain very strict guidelines on bad language, reflecting current public attitudes on this issue. There may be exceptions, based on the context in which the language is used or whether it is used in an aggressive or insulting way.

In our Consumer Advice, the most common swearwords are described as follows:

Very mild	damn, hell, God, sod.
Mild	bloody, bastard, piss, pissed, shit, son-of-a-bitch, bugger, bollocks, screw, crap, arse, shag, slag, slut, whore, arsehole, tosser, Jesus, Christ
Moderate	wanker, prick, bitch
Strong	fuck
Coarse	stronger sexual swearwords are described as 'coarse'

PRESS RELEASES 1997/98

Film Classification: *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*

Feature Film: *Gummo*

No Relaxation of Standards on Video Violence by BBFC

BBFC Announces New President: Andreas Whittam Smith

Home Office Research: Effects of Violence on Young Offenders

BBFC Decisions: *Lolita* (film), *Crash* (video) and *Kissed* (video)

James Ferman to Retire as Director of the BBFC

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PRESS STATEMENT from the Director

Film Classification: **THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK**

A number of critics and journalists have suggested that the BBFC was incautious in granting *THE LOST WORLD* a 'PG' certificate accompanied by a warning. In fact, we were extremely cautious, as we try to be in reaching all such decisions.

We also learn from experience. The first Board decision I faced was the classification of *JAWS*. Because it scared me, I jumped to the conclusion that it would do the same to children, as some others are doing now over *THE LOST WORLD*. I was wrong then, and I'm glad I took the trouble to consult three child psychiatrists, since they were unanimous in pointing out that *JAWS* would frighten adults much more than it would frighten children. They gave three reasons:

- (1) children are more at home with man-vs-beast adventures, since they are closer to their own animal natures; they also know that the beast must be defeated or contained, just as they must overcome the beast in themselves (see Bruno Bettelheim's book about fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment*);
- (2) children's stories are full of images of eating and being eaten, since children are preoccupied with their own alimentary canals; thus witches and giants are forever eating or threatening to eat children, in pies, as gingerbread men, etc;
- (3) we shouldn't judge children by adult readings of scenes, since children don't understand the medical implications of having a leg bitten off, or the pain or incapacity that would result; they see a battle between mythic forces, St George and the Dragon or Jonah and the Whale; it's as they get older that they see it in terms of real-world consequences.

When I asked the Professor of Child Psychiatry at Great Ormond Street if he wasn't worried about children having nightmares over *JAWS*, he asked what made me think nightmares were bad for children? They might be bad for parents, but they were just the mind's way of working through the fears of the day - and coming to terms with them.

When the first *JURASSIC PARK* came along, these answers came back to us. The film was seen by all the examiners, who registered their terror, but acknowledged that their own children would probably love it. A test screening was laid on for nearly 200 children aged 8 to 11, 96% of whom said they had enjoyed the film "a lot", including all the 8-year-olds. When asked to choose words to describe the film, 87% ticked "exciting", 79% "interesting", and 82% "funny in parts", while given the choice between "too frightening for me" or "good and scary", 82% chose "good and scary" while only 13% ticked "too frightening for me". Our task was to balance the needs of the 13% who found it too scary against the pleasures of the 82% for whom scary was a term of praise: this could only be done through a warning system, which is what the 'PG' is all about. Of the 44 letters we had about *JURASSIC PARK*, most were from adults imagining that their own fears would be replicated by children; there were only three letters citing the fears caused to particular children, and these were balanced by letters of praise from other children and one from a vicar thanking us for letting him take all his children, one of whom had gone to see it four times.

Continued .../

President
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Harewood, KBE
Director
James Ferman

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Registered Office as above

Unsurprisingly, therefore, when *THE LOST WORLD* was submitted, we reserved judgment until we had tested it on children themselves. But, as usual, we were cautious, testing it first on children from 9 to 11, and only then, when that enthusiastic audience had burst into loud applause as the first end credit appeared, did we consider a second screening for 6-to-9-year-olds.

In all, *THE LOST WORLD* was tested on 478 children. All of them filled out questionnaires, and overwhelmingly their vote, and that of their teachers, was for 'PG'. At both screenings, the loudest responses were the spontaneous cheer that went up when the young gymnast Kelly kicked the velociraptor out of the cabin, and the squeal of oohs and aahs that erupted when the snake wriggled down the back of the shirt. Both these moments had to be seen with children to get their full effect.

During the opening scene with the little girl, the audience was silenced and tense, but no one cried or tried to leave, either then or at any time thereafter. Some found the scene 'scary', others found it 'sad', as they did the death of Eddie later on, but for the children the saddest scene of all was when the hunters went after the dinosaurs with guns and the little ones tried to get away. The teachers confirmed that no child had been traumatised by the film, and there were no reports of nightmares or emotional disturbance afterwards. In fact, the majority would have let their younger brothers or sisters see the film, and the teachers were equally confident.

Children enjoy films that make them feel intensely, just as we do. If we photographed the faces of children in the middle of a rollercoaster ride, we might not read the emotion as pleasure, but most children come off the ride wanting to do it again, even when their parents have had more than enough.

The warning we chose was carefully calculated to reflect what we found. Only 10% of the children said the film was 'too frightening for me', and these were not necessarily the youngest. That's why we referred first to 'sensitive children' and only then to 'those under 8', an age we chose not because those of 6 and 7 were more frightened than the others, but because they had trouble concentrating during the 30 minutes of exposition and found the narrative confusing. What they loved were the dinosaurs, and many of them will probably be off to the Natural History Museum to find out more.

For the first time in the British cinema, this film carries consumer advice at the box office and over telephone booking lines:

Passed 'PG' (PARENTAL GUIDANCE)
for scary scenes of violence that
may be unsuitable for sensitive
children or those under 8.

Other films will carry such advice in the autumn, and parents are already signalling their gratitude.

29th July 1997

James Ferman

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PRESS STATEMENT

Feature Film: GUMMO

The BBFC has received a number of queries about the animal sequences in the feature film *GUMMO*, in which animals appear to suffer a level of cruelty which would be against British law if it were real. The Board has sought confirmation of the assurance in the final captions that 'no animal was injured in the making of this film'. In fact, all the animal action was monitored by the American Humane Association, counterpart to the British RSPCA, who have explained to us that each of the worrying scenes was shot using a fake or stuffed cat, and in one case a stuffed dog. They bear witness to the fact that no animal was harmed in any way during the making of the film.

The subject of the film is a community at the bottom of the scrapheap, in which every family seems to be dysfunctional and every character physically or psychologically damaged. It is a bleak, chilling look at the casualties of society, casualties that can be found in most western countries, including Britain, where Princess Diana drew attention to the plight of such people.

The first characters we meet are two teenage boys who fund their glue-sniffing by killing stray feral cats to sell on to restaurants for food. Indifferent to the suffering of humans or animals, these boys might have raised a classification problem had they been glamorised in any way, but that is not the case. Far from being role models, they are clearly no-hopers, failed by parents and schooling, and drifting through their destructive and aimless lives unattractive and excluded. It is a pessimistic and painful film, from a 23-year-old director who grew up in such a community and wants to show how such cast-offs live.

The film has been passed '18' uncut.

14th November 1997

President
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Harewood, KBE
Director
James Ferman

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PRESS STATEMENT

NO RELAXATION OF STANDARDS ON VIDEO VIOLENCE BY BBFC

It is important for the BBFC to correct recent inaccurate stories in the press. The Board has never relaxed its guidelines on video violence, which remain the strictest in the world, as reported to Parliament by the former Home Secretary, Michael Howard, in 1994. If anything, standards on violence have become stricter every year since the passing of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Nor does the Home Office-backed research by Kevin Browne of Birmingham University criticise BBFC violence policy. Instead it confirms and amplifies the Board's views about the way screen violence is interpreted by young offenders, particularly those with a violent family background. This research was conceived by the BBFC, who recommended it to the Home Office in 1994. Its findings endorse BBFC policy on the censoring of violence inflicted by macho heroes like Schwarzenegger, Stallone, Seagal and Van Damme, who are more successfully violent than their opponents and thus provide a dangerous role model for young offenders. The problem with such videos is that, by demonstrating that violence wins, they validate the violent impulses that land so many young offenders before the courts.

The author of the research, Kevin Browne, is willing to confirm that the report he submitted to the Home Office is in no way critical of the BBFC. Indeed, the only criticism arising from the research is directed at those who permit '18' rated videos to be shown to younger teenagers. It follows that those in charge of Young Offender Institutes should now require staff to observe the minimum ages laid down by the BBFC categories.

On a wider issue, the BBFC has never passed any video it believes to have been illegal, and certainly none which would have been liable to prosecution by the Crown Prosecution Service. There has recently been a debate over standards applicable to 'R18' videos, which may be supplied only in Britain's 60 or so licensed sex shops and not through mail order. The debate arose from the differences in criteria applied by the various enforcement agencies. Detailed consultations are now under way to resolve these differences in interpretation.

9 December 1997

JAMES FERMAN
DIRECTOR

President
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Harewood, KBE
Director
James Ferman

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 14.30, 18th December 1997

PRESS RELEASE

BBFC ANNOUNCES NEW PRESIDENT

The British Board of Film Classification is pleased to announce the appointment of Andreas Whittam Smith as its next President, the appointment to take effect from 1st January 1998. He succeeds Lord Harewood, who has retired after twelve years.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw MP, has announced that he is laying a notice before both Houses of Parliament designating Mr Whittam Smith under the Video Recordings Act 1984 as the authority responsible for making arrangements for the classification of videos and, where appropriate, video games. The designation cannot take effect until the notice of intention has lain before both Houses for 40 days.

The Board classifies films, videos and digital games in the United Kingdom.

Mr Whittam Smith said: "I am honoured to be asked to undertake such an important task. One of the main purposes of the Board's work is to help parents protect their children from material which might harm them. I shall have that objective constantly in mind.

"The nature of the task is spelt out in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which, in relation to video works, requires the Board to have special regard to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society by the manner in which a video work deals with criminal behaviour, illegal drugs, violent behaviour or incidents, horrific behaviour or incidents or human sexual activity.

I am setting in hand an immediate review of the Board's policy for classifying films, videos and digital games. It is sensible from time to time to examine whether the guidelines are set in the right place. In carrying out this review, the Board will consult widely with interested parties and will seek to gauge public opinion".

Mr Whittam Smith is 60. He founded The Independent in 1986, the only successful launch of a broadsheet national newspaper this century, and was its first editor from 1986-94. He remains a non-executive director of the newspaper's publishers, Newspaper Publishing plc. Mr Whittam Smith is a chairman of The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust, which owns the Churchill papers, including those bought with the help of a National Heritage lottery grant. He has also recently chaired an Inquiry into Youth Homelessness which was commissioned by ten charities working in the field. The report was published in the autumn of 1996.

He will be available from 3.00 to 5.00pm for telephone interviews. Please telephone the BBFC earlier in the day to arrange an interview time. The telephone number is 0171-439 7961.

17th December 1997

President
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Harewood, KBE
Director
James Ferman

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PRESS STATEMENT**HOME OFFICE RESEARCH:
EFFECTS OF VIDEO VIOLENCE ON YOUNG OFFENDERS**

The British Board of Film Classification welcomes the publication of the Home Office Study into the Effects of Video Violence on Young Offenders, which confirms and amplifies the Board's views about the way screen violence is interpreted by young offenders, particularly those with a violent family background. The research shows that most young people are not strongly influenced by video violence, but some could be, and they include the most violent and potentially dangerous young people in Britain. BBFC policy is focused on preventing the harm that might be caused by this minority of vulnerable and aggressive young people.

The Birmingham study was conceived by the BBFC as a follow-up to research by the Policy Studies Institute in 1993/4, which found that young offenders and non-offenders were choosing to watch the same films and videos, with a strong preference for macho heroics across both samples. The BBFC hypothesised that, because of their differences in background, the two groups might be interpreting the same material very differently, and this became the subject of the second stage of the research, undertaken by Dr Kevin Browne of Birmingham University. He has now confirmed that it is not just what people view but how they interpret it which makes the difference. Unlike ordinary teenagers, violent offenders seek out violent films and videos to reinforce and validate their own violent impulses. Teenagers with a violent family background are not only more interested in violence, they are also more likely to identify with the aggressor. They prefer macho heroes like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone, who are more successfully violent than their opponents. But, as the research points out, such heroes provide dangerous role models for young offenders since, by demonstrating that violence wins, they confirm and reinforce the violent impulses that land so many young offenders before the courts.

Home Office backing enabled Dr Browne to gain access to 82 young offenders in custody so he could observe their viewing of videos appropriate to their own age group. The videos were selected by the BBFC, three classified '15' and three '18'. He also observed video viewings by 40 non-offenders of similar ages. He found that violent offenders were more likely to prefer violent films than non-offenders, and also more likely to identify with violent heroes. Two thirds of offenders, as against only a quarter of non-offenders, chose as their favourite actors those who play violent characters whose use of violence is applauded by the film. Yet it was violent parents that had the greatest influence. In the absence of parental violence, there was no significant relationship between offending and a preference for violent films or characters. The role of screen violence, therefore, is to reinforce pre-existing tendencies, probably by confirming distorted perceptions about appropriate means of responding to provocation. Given the tendency for offenders to seek out validation of their own violent impulses, it was worrying to find the authorities in secure institutions allowing offenders to see videos classified well above their age. It is clear that Young Offender Institutes have in the past taken little notice of BBFC categories and have little understanding of the role played by the media in influencing young people from violent backgrounds. The Home Office has indicated that more attention will be paid to this problem in future.

The final phase of BBFC research into the links between screen violence and juvenile crime will explore the fantasies of violent young offenders in order to investigate the ways in which images of media violence may fuel those fantasies or trigger their acting out.

Copies of the Board's Annual Report for 1996-97 are now available, including a section on Research.

7th January 1998

President
Andreas Whittam Smith
Director
James Ferman

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PRESS STATEMENT**BBFC DECISIONS**

British citizens are entitled to know about decisions of the BBFC which affect their freedom to see the films and videos of their choice. For that reason, the Board will make a point of publishing its decisions and the thinking behind them from time to time, particularly those in which there is likely to be a significant public interest.

FILM CLASSIFICATION

The film **LOLITA**, directed by Adrian Lyne, has this month been classified '18' uncut for the cinema. This is the second film adaptation of the novel by Vladimir Nabokov, which was first published in the United Kingdom in 1959 and has since been reprinted many times.

The film, which follows the book closely, is a study of the sexual obsession of a middle-aged man, Humbert, played by Jeremy Irons, with a precocious under-age girl. The relationship is clearly shown to be destructive of Humbert, of the girl and of others who become involved.

In arriving at its decision, the BBFC was concerned to ensure that the film would not offend against any test of British law. We received the opinions of the police and of leading counsel that the film contained no photograph which was indecent in the meaning of the Protection of Children Act 1978. Indeed the film-makers had played safe by using a 19-year-old body-double for all questionable scenes.

The Board also consulted two distinguished child psychiatrists, one a specialist in child sexual abuse, who both agreed with the Board's legal advisers that the film was unlikely to encourage paedophile behaviour or put children at risk.

The Board also had to judge whether the treatment of the theme would cause widespread offence. In fact the film, like the book, abounds with indications that the breaching of what is a necessary social taboo is wrong and brings many ill-consequences in its train. While the film establishes that the relationship between Humbert and Lolita is a physical one, the relevant scenes are presented with restraint.

The Board has naturally had in mind the public's revulsion at the widespread incidence of paedophile behaviour. Nonetheless we feel able to rely upon a classification of '18' as an effective method of restricting viewing in the cinema to adults only. In the Board's view, the new **LOLITA** is a challenging and compassionate treatment of an established literary classic which adult cinemagoers have a right to judge for themselves.

VIDEO CLASSIFICATION**Rejects**

Three videos have been refused a certificate so far in 1998. Two were serial killer films in which sex is linked with the pleasure of killing. In one of those films, **MANIAC**, a series of defenceless women are stalked, terrorised, attacked and murdered, while being photographed in a deliberately sexualised way. The film is one of a genre known as 'stalk and slash', and here each stalking and killing is protracted, sometimes ending with the scalping of the victim. When the police eventually catch up with the killer, he survives, leaving us to anticipate that the stalking and mutilation will begin again. The pleasures on offer here seem to the Board to be unhealthy and dangerous because of the way that the killing of women is linked with the sexual arousal of men.

Continued.../

President
Andreas Whittam Smith
Director
James Ferman

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The Board has also refused a certificate to **FRISK**, a first person narrative of the exploits of a gay serial killer. The work is set in an erotic world of sado-masochism and portrays the sexual appetites of a young man for whom killing and engorging the victim become the ultimate thrill. The treatment is cold, lacking remorse, deliberately without moral standpoint. It plays with the idea that these killings are a part of the fantasy world of the protagonist, but the viewer is invited to share that world by experiencing the killings as both realistic and the peak of sado-masochistic pleasure. The harmful effect of the video derives from its repeated juxtaposition of sex and gross physical assault, which could have a disturbing and dangerous impact on vulnerable viewers.

Voyeurism and the Right to Privacy

In recent years, the video industry has traded increasingly in the use of hidden cameras to capture the private behaviour of ordinary people in situations in which they had the right to assume that their privacy would be respected. The pleasures offered by such videos are those of voyeurism since they purport to be, and frequently are, filmed without the knowledge or consent of those whose intimate behaviour is being captured on film. An instance of such videos is an American series filmed in a men's changing/shower room in which men are recorded going through the commonplace but private rituals of washing, drying and changing. They are, in effect, 'Peeping Tom' videos. One of this series was classified '18' a year ago at a time when the Board had been advised that there was no law of privacy in Britain. Since that decision, it has become increasingly clear that the exploitation of such material in this country could in fact constitute a breach of confidence if the privacy of a British subject were being invaded without his consent, since no defence based on the public interest would be relevant. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Britain is a signatory, guarantees a right to privacy, and the Convention is now being incorporated into British law. Given these developments, the BBFC has decided to take a stand on the issue of voyeurism and human rights, in consequence of which the Board has refused a certificate to another in the same American series, **CHANGING ROOM EXPOSED**, in which a hidden camera is used to film unsuspecting men as they change, shower, walk around without their clothes on and dress. BBFC policy will no longer accept the classification of works which breach people's privacy without there being a public interest in so doing. It is one thing for individuals to choose to participate in the making of such videos, but it is entirely another when their private life has been unknowingly and covertly filmed solely for purposes of voyeuristic curiosity.

Notable classification decisions on video

Two controversial titles have been classified '18' on video after a careful look at the issues. **CRASH** is the video version of the film whose expected arrival in British cinemas last year generated controversy to the extent that some local authorities would not permit cinemas in their areas to exhibit it. Once the film had become publicly available, however, the controversy died away and the film had a modest run without raising any further comment about its supposed dangers to society. **CRASH** concerns a couple who are unable to find sexual satisfaction inside or outside marriage and fall in with a group of people who associate sexual excitement with car crashes. The Board remains of the view that the film, whether in the cinema or on video for viewing in the home, is unlikely to harm or offend potential viewers or encourage anti-social behaviour. The BBFC has therefore classified **CRASH** '18' without cuts.

The Board has also classified **KISSED** '18' uncut. This video version of a Canadian film which concerns a girl whose obsession with death and the rituals of burial develops into a sexual fixation when she grows up and works in a mortuary. Again, controversy about the theme of necrophilia died away almost as soon as the film could be seen in British cinemas, where its responsible treatment was acknowledged by the press, who conceded that its exploration of necrophilia was done in a non-exploitative, unsensational manner. No anxiety was generated about its subject matter amongst cinema audiences, and the Board was therefore confirmed in its view that **KISSED** is not a harmful work for adults to see in the cinema or on video.

Further press statements will be issued from time to time about significant BBFC decisions.

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PRESS RELEASES

James Ferman to retire as Director of the BBFC

Mr James Ferman, Director of the British Board of Film Classification for 23 years, has today announced that he is to retire at the end of this year. The Board will immediately begin the search for a successor.

Mr Ferman was appointed in 1975 at the age of 45 and will be 68 when he leaves.

Mr Andreas Whittam Smith, President of the BBFC, said: "In my three months as President, I have quickly recognised the thoughtful and moral contribution which James Ferman makes to the work of the Board. I have found an organisation which is extremely effective in its work, and which cares deeply - and agonises often - about its responsibilities. The Board as we know it today is essentially James's creation. He can be very proud of what he has achieved in often difficult circumstances."

Mr Ferman said: "My 23 years as Director of the Board have been without doubt the most interesting and challenging of my career. It has proved an enormously enjoyable job, and I am glad that I am now able to leave it with such a strong and professional team. The Board has established itself internationally as a leader in its field, hosting a series of international conferences and initiating important research. The results of these efforts have been highly encouraging.

"There are still a number of things I want to do elsewhere which I feel passionately about and which I still have the energy to pursue.

"But first, we have some major tasks to accomplish here at the Board. In the next few months, we shall be taking on two new Vice Presidents and four examiners, all of whom will need a detailed introduction to BBFC policy and practice. More importantly, we shall be embarking on the Board's first nationwide consultation exercise, with meetings being held in major cities around the country, where the new Classification Guidelines can be presented and public opinion canvassed on how well we're fulfilling our responsibilities.

"Meanwhile, I look forward to helping Andreas Whittam Smith during his first year in charge of the Board and to helping the Board to find a new Director. My ambition has always been to leave a going concern, and that, I believe, is already assured."

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*

A copy of James Ferman's biography is attached.

Date: 27th March, 1998

Enquiries: James Ferman, Tel. 0171 - 439 7961

President
Andreas Whittam Smith
Director
James Ferman

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JAMES FERMAN - BIOGRAPHY

James Ferman has been Director of the British Board of Film Classification (formerly Film Censors) since 1975.

Born in America on 11 April 1930, Mr Ferman was educated at Cornell and later at Cambridge, where he wrote and directed a musical comedy based on Max Beerbohm's novel *Zuleika Dobson*. This was bought for the West End, where it had a successful run in 1957.

Theatrical success led to a general traineeship on ABC Television's **Armchair Theatre** (1957-59), where he directed four Sunday night plays. At 29, he became a highly successful staff director at ATV (1959-65) directing plays, drama series, and documentaries."

In 1963-64, he was principal director on The **Planemakers**, which won a BAFTA award for best dramatic series.

His drama productions in 1964-65 included the ITV entry to the Monte Carlo Festival, **Miss Hanago**, after which he began a 10-year career as a freelance, mostly at the BBC, where he was a regular director on **The Wednesday Play** and **Play for Today**. **The Pistol** was the first of many distinguished plays he directed for the BBC. In 1965, he was one of five BAFTA nominees for Best Drama Director.

The following year, his BBC production of **Kafka's Amerika** won the Critics Circle Award, and in 1969 his production of Somerset Maugham's **Before the Party** won a BAFTA Award.

He also won awards for TV commercials and a series of management training films.

A TV documentary on heroin addiction led to a series of five documentary films for teachers, doctors and social workers called **'Drugs and Schoolchildren'**, which were shown to all teachers in London secondary schools on the ILEA Cable Television Network. Those teaching films were used regularly in the training of specialist workers in the drugs field in the 1970s and '80s and are still in the library of the World Health Organisation. That series of documentaries became the basis of a part-time lecture-ship in community studies at the Polytechnic of Central London (now Westminster University), where he was Director of the Community Mental Health Programme organised jointly with MIND (1973-75).







He was appointed Secretary of the BBFC in June 1975, when the Board had a staff of 11 occupying one shabby floor at 3 Soho Square and classifying 424 films for the cinema. In 1997, a staff of 51 occupied the whole of that building and classified 436 films, 3187 videos and 47 digital media, including video games. In 12 years under the Video Recordings Act, the BBFC has classified 41,600 video features, not one of which has ever been cited in a criminal trial as having had an anti-social influence.

In 1982, the Board organised the first world conference for film classification boards. There have been three more international conferences since then, attended not just by film classifiers but by regulators of video, television and the new digital media. The first European conference was held at the Board in 1989, since when European Boards have developed close consultative relations, including those with the world's leading academic researchers. In Britain and around the world, the law has been developing rapidly, and the BBFC has been consulted on a great many pieces of media legislation. Information has been shared through a worldwide network of contacts and communications, which will shortly be expedited through the internet. For 23 years, the Director feels he has been lucky to work in such an interesting and challenging environment.

Mr Ferman is married, with 2 grown-up children and 3 grandchildren. He enjoys the theatre, music, reading and hill-walking.

Film Statistics: 1970 to 1997

Figures from 1970, when age-bars were set at 14 ('AA') and 18 ('X'). In 1982, the former was raised to 15, with categories renamed '15' and '18', and the 'R18' was introduced for club films. In 1989, a '12' was added. Figures in brackets give the number cut or, in the final column, passed with cuts in later years.

Year	Total	 U	 PG 'A'	 12 (1989)	 15 'AA'	 18 'X'	 R18 (1983)	Refused
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 (148)		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 (-)	74 (4)		115 (11)	139 (64)		1
1983	390 (105)	23 (1)	95 (12)		100 (7)	137 (58)	33 (27)	2
1984	376 (72)	12 (-)	92 (17)		126 (5)	130 (47)	13 (3)	3
1985	351 (67)	16 (-)	85 (12)		146 (10)	103 (45)	-	1
1986	348 (44)	25 (-)	88 (14)		137 (12)	107 (18)	-	1
1987	330 (38)	16 (-)	89 (15)		129 (2)	96 (21)	-	-
1988	337 (48)	12 (-)	76 (11)		142 (5)	107 (32)	-	-
1989	369 (60)	12 (-)	75 (10)	23 (7)	152 (11)	107 (32)	-	-
1990	396 (43)	18 (-)	69 (7)	50 (2)	147 (9)	111 (25)	-	1
1991	341 (45)	31 (1)	62 (6)	45 (8)	124 (13)	79 (17)	-	-
1992	319 (28)	21 (1)	81 (8)	32 (4)	113 (7)	72 (8)	-	-
1993	350 (38)	16 (-)	76 (11)	53 (6)	123 (7)	81 (13)	1 (1)	-
1994	374 (21)	32 (1)	84 (8)	57 (1)	116 (7)	85 (4)	-	-
1995	364 (27)	26 (-)	99 (15)	43 (4)	113 (7)	83 (1)	-	-
1996	364 (21)	22 (1)	80 (6)	49 (4)	146 (3)	67 (7)	-	-
1997	382 (15)	25 (-)	100 (5)	50 (5)	125 (2)	82 (3)	-	-

Video Appeals Committee Decision on Carmageddon

Facts

1. This is an appeal by Sales Curve Interactive Limited (S.C.I.) Against the Refusal of the British Board of Film Classification ("the Board") to grant a video classification certificate for a video game entitled "Carmageddon". The game is well-titled being a car game where the principal objective is destruction whether of cars, animals or people. It costs about £35.

In its submission, the Board describes the game as follows:

2. *"It is clear that the emphasis is less on winning than creating mayhem, and scoring bonus points on the way. The player is involved in what amounts to a large scale <demolition derby> in which, driving the pre-selected hot rod, he attempts not only to beat, but to wipe out the opposition by ramming and crashing into competing vehicles. Credit points are awarded for each successful smash and bonus points are earned for "Style" and "artistic impression."*

3. It should be said that it is possible to play the game by merely racing other cars without crashing into other vehicles. In addition to vehicular mayhem, bonus points are also awarded for killing pedestrians. At the beginning of each game, the player is told how many pedestrians and animals he or she can hit – a total of 16,474 if all stages of the game are played. We saw in one sequence that a disabled man walking with a stick was knocked down; and by driving over a football pitch, many of the players can be killed. The screams of the pedestrians and bovine sounds from cows accompany the killings.

4. In the top left hand corner of the screen, the face of the driver appears, sometimes showing pleasure at the destruction, sometimes expressing in crude terms his dismay when he is struck by other vehicles, or drives himself into difficulty. Music can be added but it is clear that the game has a greater dramatic effect without it.

5. There are two methods of playing the game; either from behind the wheel of the car or from a point behind the car. Clearly the former is more exciting but it is also far more difficult and can only really be attempted by a person experienced in playing video games. When a pedestrian or an animal is hit, the windscreen of the car is spattered with blood, more realistically should the player be seated in the driver's seat. This is sometimes accompanied by "splatter bonus" across the screen. There is no doubt that in real life, should any driver use his motor car in this way, he would find himself in the dock on charges of motor manslaughter or causing death by dangerous driving at the very least. Indeed, murder charges would be very likely.

6. However, S.C.I. maintains that the Board has misunderstood the concept behind the work which is a tongue-in-cheek fantasy demolition derby and, again, contrary to the Board's assertion that winning is not the primary purpose of the game, the objective is very much to win in order to achieve number one spot. The appellants have commissioned a survey carried out by an independent Internet site and over 80% of the players preferred the vantage point behind the car rather than to be seated behind the wheel.

7. We were told by the Managing Director and founder of S.C.I., Jane Cavanagh that the game Carmageddon took two years to develop and that independent focus groups that viewed it thought it was a sensational product. The overwhelming response was that it was fun, entertaining with very clever technology. The game has been distributed world wide, has sold 300,000 copies and is entirely British made. It is aimed at adults and that if there is to be a console version the game's software would have to be re-written and it would need a fresh certificate.

8. Miss Cavanagh said that Carmageddon was arguably one of the best driving games produced, it has black humour, is tongue-in-cheek and that she would not market a product which she felt had anti-social effects. She also told us that their research suggested that the age of the persons playing the game averaged between 29 and 32. She agreed some people might find the game offensive, she had targeted a market over the age of 18 years and did not think adults would be offended. She was not claiming the product was suitable for children, their research suggested young people would not play it and they had not received a single letter of complaint.

The Playing of the Game

9. The Board in its submission contends that it is relatively simple to play the game. No doubt those experienced in the use of computers and the playing of video games would have little difficulty but those members of the Committee without that experience had some difficulty and without assistance may not have even been able to load the game in order to play it. Carmageddon comprises 36 games but the player cannot progress beyond the first three unless he wins them, and he cannot do so if he were to concentrate solely upon the slaughter of people and animals. The Appellants make the point that it is unlikely that anybody would pay £35 for a game and be able to play only 12% of it.

10. The player of the game may use the slow-motion facility and may also replay previous scenes. We saw both the slow-motion and the replay demonstrated to us and found that the content of the play and the killing of innocent bystanders and animals became more graphic and more realistic.

11. The Appellants in their submission say:

"The Committee must bear in mind that Personal Computers (P.C.s) that can play the video work, cost anything from £1250 to £2500. Unlike video recorders which parents are often content to let their children use unsupervised, it is unlikely that even the most irresponsible of parents would allow children access to their P.C.s Unlike a video recorder, which requires only the touch of the 'Play' button to use, the video work involves a complex, and time consuming 'instal program'. A high level of technical knowledge is needed to set the video work up ready for play. This degree of technical knowledge requires a level of intelligence and computer literacy which is by and large the product of an adult and sophisticated consumer with a high disposable income".

12. The technical aspects of playing the game are not that difficult. There are only a few buttons and keys that are used and there is no doubt that, with practice, it would not be too difficult to master the first three games. But on one, admittedly brief, acquaintance with the game as players, we are under no illusion that while for members of our Committee playing the game at the higher levels it needs a skill which would take some time to develop, the young who are skilled in computer use would find it comparatively simple to master. We shall come back to the points in paragraph 11 above.

Other Videos

13. We have also viewed the Demonstration Tape of Carmageddon. The contents of the tape are the same as the game itself but, perhaps, because it is fairly short, the violence seems to be more graphic, especially on the football field where advertisements on the perimeter of the field are very clear including one "The Name of the Game is Maim". However, as with the game itself, it is not possible to see with any clarity the faces of the humans, or "sprites" as they are called.

14. We also were shown short extracts from certain well-known cinematograph films which have been given 18 Classifications by the Board. The extracts are stomach-churning and, undoubtedly, worse than Carmageddon, given the nature of the violence and that human beings are involved. But we must point out that these extracts form only a very small part of the films, whereas the content of Carmageddon comprises violence of some kind from beginning to end. It also needs to be emphasised that these are cinema films where it is far easier to enforce the classification and ensure that under-age viewers are not admitted. We have also seen extracts from video games with 18 and 15 classification.

The Video Recordings Act 1984

15. Section 2 of The Video Recordings Act 1984 ("the Act") states that a video game is an exempted work and, therefore, does not require a classification certificate from the Board, which under Section 4(1) has been designated the body responsible for classifying videos if the video is not exempted. Section 2(2) sets out those instances where a video work is not exempted -

16. *"(2) a video work is not an exempted work for those purposes if, to any significant extent, it depicts -*

(a) [not applicable]

(b) mutilation or torture of, or other acts of gross violence towards, humans or animals.

(c) [not applicable]

(d) [not applicable]

Or is likely to any significant extent to stimulate or encourage anything falling within paragraph (a) or, in the case of anything falling within paragraph (b), is likely to any extent to do so.

17. *(3) A video work is not an exempted work for those purposes, if, to any significant extent, it depicts criminal activity which is likely to any significant extent to stimulate or encourage the commission of offences."*

18. Section 4(1)

The Secretary of State may by notice under this section designate any person as the authority responsible for making arrangements -

(a) for determining for the purposes of this Act whether or not video works are suitable for classification certificates to be issued in respect of them, having special regard to the likelihood of video works in respect of which such certificates have been issued being viewed in the home,

(b) in the case of works which are determined in accordance with the arrangements to be so suitable,

(i) for making such other determinations as are required for the issue of classification certificates and,

(ii) for issuing such certificates and,

(c) for maintaining a record of such determinations (whether determinations made in pursuance of arrangements made by that person or by any person previously designated under this section)...

19. Section 4(A) was inserted into the 1984 Act by the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994. Subsections (1) and (2) read as follows:

"(1) The designated authority shall, in making any determination as to the suitability of the video work, have special regard (among other relevant factors) to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers, or, through their behaviour, to society by the manner in which the work deals with -

- (a) criminal behaviour;*
- (b) [not applicable]*
- (c) violent behaviour or incidents;*
- (d) horrific behaviour or incidents;*
- (e) [not applicable]*

20. (2) For the purposes of this section -

"Potential viewer" means any person (including a child or young person) who is likely to view the video work in question if a classification certificate or a classification certificate of a particular description were issued;

"Suitability" means suitability for the issue of a classification certificate or suitability for the issue of a certificate of a particular description;

"Violent behaviour" includes any act inflicting or likely to result in the infliction of injury;

And any behaviour or activity referred to in subsection (1)(a) to (e) above shall be taken to include behaviour or activity likely to stimulate or encourage it.

21. In introducing what was to become Section 4 (A) in the House of Lords, the Government Minister, Earl Ferrers said -

A "potential viewer" includes anyone who is likely to see the work in question if it is classified or placed in a particular category and it specifically includes children and young persons who are under the age of 18."

The Minister continued -

"The criteria mean that the British Board of Film Classification must consider who is in fact likely to see a particular video, regardless of the classification, so that if it knows that a particular video is likely to appeal to children and is likely to be seen by them, despite its classification being for an older group, then the board must consider those children as potential viewers. That does not mean that the board must then ban the video altogether. The board will still have discretion on how, or whether to classify it; but it must bear in mind the effect which it might have on children who may be potential viewers."

Self-Regulation

22. Most videos are exempt but the industry which produces them has set up a system of voluntary self-regulation devised by the European Leisure Software Publishers Association based on classification by minimum age. The system is administered by the Video Standards

Council which came to the conclusion that the game is exempt and could be distributed with a 15-plus classification under the scheme of self-regulation. The rating was later changed to one of 18.

23. We had evidence from Mr Roger Bennett who is the Director General of ELSPA, which is a registered trade association now representing some 120 United Kingdom companies concerned with computer games. Fully 99% of all manufacturers of video software are represented. Among other employments held by Mr Bennett he directed marketing of the original computer and video magazine.

24. We also had evidence from Mr Ian Muir, a former Detective Chief Inspector in the Metropolitan Police Special Branch. Mr Muir told us that the Video Standards Council comprises the Secretary-General and himself. The rating system which started early in 1994 applies to all members of the Association. It is a voluntary scheme where a company self-assesses its own game with the assistance of a self-regulation pack. The Council, in effect Mr Muir, looks at the self-assessment form and if it has any doubt it contacts the publisher. The game initially was given a 15 rating but the company considered an 18 rating was more appropriate and said so. As a result Mr Muir viewed the game for some 45 minutes. He said he thought the game was exempt but SCI felt 18 was the proper classification.

25. Mr Bennett told us that the Video Standards Council, which is independent of ELSPA classifies all video games, it has done so in respect of over 3000 games. He told us that in comparison with other games he was amazed at the Board's classification and thought it had lost the plot as to how the game was presented and what it represented. He himself has played the game, felt it was challenging and very playable with great depth. Mr Bennett told us only one complaint had been received. These games are designed for the challenge and he felt that there was a tremendous challenge in this game.

26. As we have stated before, this game can be played only on a P.C. Mr Bennett told us that owners of PCs are generally representative of the socio-economic strata of middle class well adjusted citizens. PCs are almost entirely orientated to adult use whereas video consoles, which are simple to operate, are used by the young. We should interpose here that Mr Ferman told us that there are now 4.5 million homes which have PCs and it is projected that 40 per cent of households in the United Kingdom will have one by the year 2000.

27. We think it laudable that the industry should have a self-regulatory system and whether or not it is effective we have no doubt that the Video Standards Council cannot match the Board for its depth of experience in classification even though we recognise that the Board has been sent few video games for its consideration.

28. The game has also been considered by the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification. We have seen a copy of the Director's letter which states -

"The Classification Board has, in a majority decision, given the computer game "Carmageddon" a restricted MA 15+ classification with consumer advice of "High Level Animated Violence". Accordingly the game will be restricted to those 15 years and over".

29. The letter continues -

"The Board noted that while some people may view with concern the conceptual impact of visual depictions in the game, such depictions are highly unrealistic and not detailed. The Board

is of the view that the impact of such elements is mitigated by the intensity of the competitive skill - based game play and the need to master the game controls."

30. We interpose here to repeat our own experience that the game does need a good level of skill to play successfully and to do so needs a high level of concentration.

31. The Australian Board concludes its letter -

"In the Board's opinion the game does not deal with any matters in such a way that they offend against standards generally accepted by reasonable adults to the extent that it should be refused classification.

32. *The Classification Board noted that the game fits within a well established genre of car racing computer games which involve violence between competitors and elements of black humour, and which will therefore be familiar to players of that genre. The Board also noted that the game contains strong concepts supported by gory but unrealistic animated visuals which may be of concern to some people and which are not suitable for younger children. Accordingly, the Board has legally restricted the game to a mature audience of 15 years and over."*

33. We note that the Australian Board reached its decision by a majority. We cannot and do not make the assumption that the minority would have declined to award a certificate. The Australian Board enjoys a high reputation and we understand that its decision was followed by the New Zealand Board.

Research

34. We feel acutely that there is a dearth of research on the effects of video games upon players, especially children. One of the committee felt that we were being asked to take a decision with one hand tied behind our backs.

35. We did, however, have two reports as well as oral evidence (by way of telephone link) from Dr Guy Cumberbatch of the Communications Research Group. Dr Cumberbatch is experienced in this type of research and was commissioned by SCL to produce reports on the effect of Carmageddon on those over 18 years of age.

36. We have to say that the groups surveyed were very small, in the first research on the game when it had been modified the number was six, of which five worked in the video industry. The second group saw the game under review and consisted of six persons from the video industry and three enthusiastic players of the game. Additionally, some 203 persons were surveyed and of these 105 took part in detailed interviews, the remaining 98 were polled through use of a questionnaire. None, as we understand it, had played the game: 44% were under 20 year of age, 33% were between 21 and 25. Appendix 4 is an interesting statistic showing that 52% of this sample of 203 played video games for less than 5 hours per week, 19% played for 16 hours or more.

37. Other statistics were that an average of about 18% of under 18s read P.C. magazines and that about 3800 persons under 18 were convicted of aggravated taking of a motor vehicle.

38. It was George Bernard Shaw who said that the first test of an educated man is not to be bored by statistics. The sample here is small and dominated, so far as the games players are concerned by persons connected to the industry. The statistics reveal that the overwhelming majority of those questioned dismiss somewhat contemptuously any suggestion that the game had any effect upon them or would influence them to do anything criminal or violent. A common comment was that Carmageddon was only a game and that the characters were not real people.

39. However, when asked whether games could directly influence other groups' behaviour, children or "little kids" were those most frequently mentioned as, perhaps, being susceptible. Others included those with some form of mental illness or who had aggressive tendencies.

40. We come back to the research that shows that the preponderance of those playing video games are in their middle to late twenties. We are bound to say we are surprised and somewhat sceptical of this. Many schools now have computers and the Prime Minister has expressed himself to be keen to see the population as computer literate. The government is giving IT training to all teachers over the next 5 years and children are expected to have basic computer skills. Our own experience is that the young are well able to manage P.C.s and that many who are under 14 are highly skilled. However, the fact that they have these skills means only that they are capable of playing video games, not that they necessarily do so.

41. Dr Cumberbatch told us that in his experience younger age groups have a more mature view than given credit by adults and teachers. They can make sensible judgments and can readily make distinctions between reality and fantasy and between films and games. He said that computer games are a time filler, car chases are common in them, games playing manufactures excitement and is a totally different thing from reality. There are video recorders in 90-95 % of households in the United Kingdom and there is concern that children play unsuitable tapes on them in the absence of their parents. But, generally, parents have control of the hardware of a P.C. and there is overwhelming evidence in the belief of parental responsibility.

42. Some members of the Committee were sceptical of this statement. In an article, Dr Ken Parsons, a senior lecturer at Manchester University, states that he believes children are taking video games more seriously than many adults realise and that playing a game can be realism as far as a child is concerned. In this way, he believes children and young people may be addicted to violence.

Matters to Consider

43. It seems to us that we must consider these matters -

- (a) Is Carmageddon an exempt game?
- (b) If it is not an exempt game, can it be given a classification?
- (c) In considering (b) we need to come to a conclusion about the effect of the game upon -
 - (I) Adults
 - (II) Children

Is Carmageddon an Exempt Game?

44. Mr Geoffrey Robertson Q.C. who represented the company at the hearing told us that he was not asking us to make a ruling as to whether or not the game was exempt. He confirmed there is no authoritative High Court decision, it is a vague area of law and whether the game is exempt or not is moot. He said the company had taken the responsible step of seeking classification on the merits and that for the purposes of this appeal he was, without prejudice to any further action, not seeking to argue exemption. However, in our view, Carmageddon is not an exempt game. The game depicts to a significant extent gross violence towards humans and animals. It also depicts criminal activity in the manner in which the cars are driven in such a way that a criminal charge would doubtless result if this were reality.

45. We appreciate that one cannot readily identify faces and some of us consider that the animals do not really have a realistic view about them but, nevertheless, we are firmly of the opinion that the game has to be submitted for certification.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

a) The Board

46. In Paragraph 11 of the Board's reply it compares Carmageddon with other video games. We think we should set out this paragraph in its entirety –

"Where then is the harm sufficient to justify the Board's refusal of a certificate? The Notice of Appeal argues that there are already numerous computer games on the market which depict violence far more graphic than in this particular game. We agree, but these are all in recognizably established formats like "shoot-em-ups" or "beat-em-ups" which have their origin in the arcades, and the violence normally takes place in a contest between equally matched opponents, so there is an element of self-defence in every match. The games cited in para 1, Duke Nukem, Doom, Resident Evil, and Mortal Kombat are all set in a sci-fi fantasy context in which the principal combatants are not human but grotesque aliens or monsters presented in a clearly animated cartoon format, a model followed by the Appellant in the modified version of CARMAGEDDON, where the pedestrians became death-dealing zombies. Another difference between the games is that, unlike CARMAGEDDON, these earlier games do not offer a continuous series of targets who cannot fight back (children, old people, the infirm); there are other tasks to perform, the players are involved in risk-taking and decision-making all the while and could easily come a cropper if they adopted a gung-ho stance and failed to concentrate on the obstacles in their path. CARMAGEDDON is wholly weighted in the player's favour, offering little to inhibit violent urges. Indeed, it is an inbuilt feature of the game that from time to time it positively encourages the player to commit gross acts of violence against defenceless targets. Moreover, the techniques of violence are significantly different from the other games cited where the killing is with weapons, often fantastic weapons, of a kind not readily available in real life; in CARMAGEDDON, on the other hand, the lethal weapon is one that many of us wield every day, a motor car, and the death toll caused by cars is a major problem in every advanced nation".

47. The Board goes on to say that it is difficult to prevent teenagers joyriding and recklessly driving for kicks which occasionally results in casualties. It makes the valid point that at home it is always difficult for children to be supervised by their parents, sometimes the parents are absent or irresponsible.

b) The Company

48. The company strongly asserts that the game will not be played by children or young persons. Its research indicates that most game players will be in their late twenties to early thirties who are unlikely to be cohabiting with children or siblings who are teenagers.

49. We have already mentioned at paragraph 11 the point made about the cost of a P.C. and the unlikelihood of a teenager having access to one. As will be seen, the view of the minority is not in agreement with this statement. The company also makes the point that gratuitous and graphic violence is contained in videos that have been granted a certificate in recent years. The conclusion of the written submission is important and to do justice to it we set it out in full –

"The Video Work is a fantasy, tongue-in-cheek racing game. In the process of the race, computer generated sprites can be eliminated, but this is done very much in a tongue-in-cheek manner and is certainly not the primary purpose behind the game. It is plain from its reply that the BBFC has misunderstood the object and content of the Video Work. In its own words it has failed to appreciate the humour. This humour was noted and appreciated by the Australian Office of Film and Literature which rated the Video Work as a mature 15 and over. The Video Work is significantly less violent than many other computer video works, videos and films that have received certificates. There is no evidence to suggest that there is any link between computer games and aggressive behaviour or that the Video Work is likely to any extent to stimulate or encourage the commission of offences. The demographic groups that play the Video Work would render such a link in the case of the Video Work all the more unlikely. Over the last five months the Appellant has sold over 300,000 copies of the Video Work, in 60 countries. The Video Work has achieved the number 1 chart position in many countries. Not one incident of any form of anti-social behaviour has been suggested or linked to the Video Work. Nor indeed, has the Appellant received one single letter of complaint regarding the content of the Video Work. In fact the only negative comments to the Appellant reflect the fact the UK purchasers feel very aggrieved that they are not able to purchase the product otherwise available throughout the rest of the world. The Committee is urged in those circumstances to reject the Board's determination and allow this appeal".

THE ORAL SUBMISSIONS

a) The Board

50. We shall not set out all the submissions made to us, suffice it to say we have considered them all very carefully and are grateful to both parties for putting them so clearly.

51. Mr Ferman for the Board told us that it was a very serious matter for the Board to reject a work, only 50 having been rejected in over 12 years. The Board had seen some 7.0 % of the video games produced but had not seen the games in the applicant's reply. He had no doubt the game required consideration for a certificate because of its gross violence.

52. Violence had to be considered in the context of racing games. In Carmageddon the violence is not done by psychopaths, the man behind the wheel is a demon driver. The motivation is to kill innocent people, which is distinctly unsettling, and the Board was morally unsettled by the game, indeed very worried about it. He was not suggesting that the game would change behaviour but the Board was concerned by the "drip, drip factor" with players slowly being desensitised.

53. Mr Ferman disputed the assertion that teenagers did not watch on P.C.s. Some 40% of teenagers watched or played on family PCs or in other people's homes. He said that this game did not penalise violence to pedestrians, it gives points for killing the innocent. It is a first person game, it is early days in respect of research into these games and the Board must be cautious. In this game the graphics are very good.

54. Mr Ferman went on to say that we cannot any longer maintain the myth that video categories operate in the real world, under age viewing is common place and there is very little control. He said that it must be assumed that 18 and 15 certificates do have some effect, the categories warned parents. He concluded by saying that this is the only video game the Board had seen where innocent people and animals are killed for kicks, killing proliferates and is disturbing. He did not think it would necessarily encourage joyriding but he was concerned about its affect upon the anti-compassion society and young "laddish" adults.

b) The Company

55. Mr Robertson told us the game was a real breakthrough in technology, it was harmless, escapist fun, the humour was black and ironical. Games such as this relieve stress, there was no evidence that joyriding resulted from the playing of the game. The Board's reading of the game is bizarre and over the top and parts of the Board's written submission are factually inaccurate.

56. The game is difficult to play and the Board needed help to set it up. It is unlikely to be played by teenagers, the research was to the contrary. The game is a sci-fi fantasy, the people and animals are unreal, driving skill is the correct focus and one of the advantages in the game's favour is that it does not engage players in inter-active violence. There is no trading blow for blow.

57. Mr Robertson pointed out that the Board is inexperienced in computer games, which is true. The digitized figures self destruct, they do not behave as real people would do as they make little or no effort to get out of the way of the car. The driving is incredible in the risks and dangers that have to be taken. We are not looking at Carmageddon the movie, the psychology of a game is different to a movie.

58. Mr Robertson urged us to take into account Article 10 of the European Convention on human rights. The Article reads as follows:-

10 (1) *Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.*

10 (2) *The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.*

59. He pointed out that the burden of proof was on the Board to show that a significant number of people would be adversely affected by the playing of the game and he also submitted that we should consider the game on its merits and not look ahead to other games.

DECISION

60. We are divided as to our decision and our reasons.

a) European Convention on Human Rights

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the Convention giving international obligations and citizens of the United Kingdom are permitted to petition the Commission and the Court. Nevertheless, the Convention has not been introduced into English law by statute and, therefore, we have no need to consider it.

61. But we have to take into account that for some time now the Board has had regard to Article 10 and did so in this case. Furthermore, the Government has announced its intention of introducing a Bill of Rights into English law and has recently published such a Bill. We are

unanimously of the opinion that we should take into account the Convention and approach our decision on the basis that the burden of proof is on the Board. The Convention allows classification of films and video works and the Board is permitted to have regard to the level of violence in the work presented to it.

b) The Minority

62. The minority fully supports the decision of the Board. In coming to this conclusion, they took into account the following facts about Carmageddon:

- (1) The action is not only interactive, but is from a first person perspective, with the player carrying out the 'killings'.
- (2) The people and cows are portrayed as helpless victims.
- (3) The 'sprites' are not cartoon characters, but are reasonably realistic portrayals.
- (4) The game will be played in various ways. It is clear from the demonstration tape that one way to play it will be to 'kill' large numbers of people and cows, and to obtain credit for so doing. Thus 'killing' is rewarded, and avoiding people is not.
- (5) The 'killing' is frequently accompanied by exultant shouts from the driver in a top corner of the screen.

63. The Board contended, and it was not seriously disputed, that this combination of features had not previously been put to it for classification, and that this represented a departure from previous games it had been asked to classify.

64. The minority note, and accept, that in coming to its decision not to classify, the burden of proof lies with the Board to show that the work comes within the boundary that the relevant Acts set out to establish for refusal to classify. However the wording of the Act makes it clear that the proof required by sub-section (1) of Section 4A extends only to the need to show that the work may cause harm to '*potential viewers, or, through their behaviour, to society ...*'. The Government Minister introducing the amendment in the House of Lords made it clear that it was intended that potential viewers might include children under the age of 18 years, presumably if they were likely to have access to the work in question.

65. Clearly, any work, even the most innocuous, might cause harm in some circumstances. The minority therefore felt they, themselves, needed to come to a more precise definition. It is their view that it would be reasonable to interpret the Act, as amended, to intend that, for a work to be refused classification by the Board, there must be reasonable grounds for considering that it might cause harm to a significant number of individuals likely to view it; and that there is no significant evidence that it might not cause harm.

66. Their grounds for considering that the work may cause harm are as follows:

- (1) The minority consider the work will be attractive to young people under the age of 17 years, and indeed very attractive to 13 to 15 year olds. They do not accept the contention of the manufacturers that the game is either too difficult or too expensive for children, or that parents do not allow access to their PCs by children. Expensive PCs are now specifically targeted for use by children. As the Board showed, they are already very widely available and are becoming more so. The minority frankly do not believe that the readership survey of PC magazines reported by Dr Cumberbatch provides any sort of

a safe basis for assuming the game will not be played by under 18s. Information from teachers and parents is that children in their early teens are frequent users of PCs. In the absence of any information systematically collected from children or their parents on the usage of PCs for games of this type, the minority must assume their information is correct.

67. The minority consider that it is possible that children and young people may be harmed in two main ways:

- (a) They may be encouraged to drive recklessly. The manufacturers argue that, because young people under the age of 17 years are not allowed to drive cars, they could not be affected in this way. The minority do not agree. In Appendix 3 of his September report, Dr Cumberbatch provides data on convictions for aggravated vehicle taking in 1992. Forty eight per cent of those convicted were under the age of 18 years, a total of 4,028 offenders. It is well known that offences in any category other than homicide greatly exceed convictions. The British Crime Survey (1992) provides an estimate of over 500,000 thefts of motor vehicles for 1991 (Table A2.4, page 114). Assuming the proportion of those convicted who are under age is the same as that committing the offense, this means that, in one year, about a quarter of a million cars are stolen and driven away by under 18s. (This may be an under-estimate as children may be less likely to be charged, or it may be an over-estimate because they are more likely to be caught, but it is probably not far out). The manufacturers contend that those under age children who commit motoring offences are likely to come from poor families and are very unlikely to be able to afford PCs. It is true that under age children convicted of motoring offences are likely to come from poor families, but self-report offender studies make it clear that there is actually only a weak link between youth crime and social class. Thus a large number of under 18s do drive cars. Might their driving be affected? There is no evidence one way or the other. The view of the minority is that it is improbable, but by no means impossible, that their driving might be adversely affected by playing the game.
- (b) It is their view that, by playing this game, children and young people may become desensitised to violence and more prone to inflict violence on others. The minority would draw attention to the evidence that exposure to televised violence increases the risk of aggressive behaviour in children and young people. They are aware that Dr Cumberbatch, the consultant to the manufacturers takes a different view but the view of most child psychologists and many teachers differ from his. For example, the Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Youth and Violence 1991 - 1993 states, *"Viewing violence increases desensitisation to violence, resulting in calloused attitudes towards violence directed at others and a decreased likelihood to take action on behalf of the victim when violence occurs (behavioural apathy) ... viewing violence increases viewers' appetites for becoming involved with violence or exposing themselves to violence."*

68. Clearly, computer games may not have the same effect as televised violence. The involvement of the player in the action may perhaps make it more likely and the lesser degree of realism less likely that there will be a negative impact. There certainly is a need for more research into the impact of computer games, but, in the meantime, the minority regard the evidence from televised violence as relevant and encouraging their position of caution.

69. The minority note that the amendment to the Act draws a distinction between harm to the individual and possible effects on change of behaviour towards society. Drawing the same distinction, they regard it as possible, but not highly possible, that playing this game will change behaviour, but regard it as highly possible that some individuals will be desensitised to violence,

and thus harmed. There are in society a significant number of young people in their teens and twenties (far from a tiny minority), who are serious risk-takers and prone to react to frustration with physical violence. The minority believes that such young people are quite likely both to be greatly attracted to this game and to be adversely affected by it.

70. They agree with Dr Cumberbatch's statement that children are generally better at distinguishing fact from fantasy than many adults give them credit for. In their view this is not relevant. It is perfectly possible to be moved to action in real life by a work of fiction that one knows to be the product of imagination. They accept the manufacturer's assurance that the gruesome events portrayed are intended to be perceived as mildly humorous or 'tongue-in-cheek'. They have to say that they did not find the action portrayed in the slightest bit funny, although they enjoy what usually passes for 'black humour'. They accept that many young people who play this game may see it as funny, but think there will be a significant minority who will 'play it for real', and obtain satisfaction from the 'killing' that is portrayed. The notion that entertainment can be derived by 'killing' innocent pedestrians and animals is hard to justify.

71. Finally, the minority know of no evidence to suggest that a game of this type will not cause harm along the lines suggested. In their view, the sample of interviewees described by Dr Cumberbatch is highly selected, in a way that is likely to result in the expression of views that games portraying violence are harmless, so that they cannot attach any validity to the work he reports.

72. In conclusion, and in the light of the views they have expressed above, the minority repeat that they fully support the Board's action in refusing a classification.

c) The Majority

73. The majority took into account that there are many people with aggressive problems. Plenty of them got into fights and other aggressive situations without the help of computer games; they are easily moved to anger, they are edgy people and it is recognised that those between 18 and 25 years of age commit the most violent crime. The research was not greatly helpful, the sample was exceedingly small where it related to those who played the game and the majority of the respondents were connected to the video trade. The research did however indicate, particularly when considered with the evidence that the game has sold 300,000 without apparent detrimental effect, that adults are not directly affected in that the game is unlikely to induce copycat effects in them. Nevertheless, the majority, as with their minority colleagues feel strongly that video games of this kind need serious research; not only into the sociological effects but also into the psychology of games playing and what the Board described so eloquently as the 'drip-drip' effect.

74. The majority agreed with the company and with the research that the purpose of the game is scoring points and winning. If one concentrates on killing it is unlikely that you will win. This is an activity game calling up pictures and creating events, there is instantaneous movement from one event to another and in order to get up to the next level it is necessary to exercise considerable concentration in the repetition of the processes. It is necessary to distinguish between fantasy and reality; the majority accept this is a fantasy game, there is no slowing down of the cars, the cows were more realistic because they were bigger and more visible. There was no real feeling of hitting a pedestrian or an animal because the speed of the game threw up the next obstacle very quickly. If there was a feeling of hitting it was not a delinquent feeling. The blood on the windscreen is a joke: a bad joke but nevertheless a joke.

75. The majority paid great attention to the view of the minority that there would be desensitisation, especially among those playing games for hours on end. Again, reference is made to the lack of compelling research. We all find it difficult to accept that the game is mostly played by persons well into their 20s. The majority think that by the very nature of the game and its

playing intensity players would be turned on by the moment of excitement which would quickly evaporate when the game was completed. Boredom would set in before desensitisation could.

76. The majority are of the opinion that an 18 certificate is the correct classification. In coming to this decision they have, nevertheless, considered the effect the game may have on children in view of Mr Ferman's statement that under age viewing is prevalent. Had this game been playable on a video console the majority should have had some difficulty in recommending even an 18 certificate. We know that children are imitative and need to be guided into the distinction between right and wrong and to feelings of compassion. In relation to the social rather than the personal affects of the game, should it be played by under 18s, the majority considered the statistics in relation to underage driving. They suspected that most of those convictions relate to those in the 16 and 17 age group and one must have regard to the fact that those under 16 are unlikely to be able to drive a motor car, certainly the vast majority. The majority accept that because the game is playable only on a P.C. it is far less likely at the moment that teenagers will be able to play even though they increasingly have access to a whole barrage of technology. Would a significant number of those under 18 play the game? The research suggests, and the majority believe, they must accept that classification works at least to some degree and that adults are reluctant to let their children loose on such an expensive piece of machinery as a computer. The answer of the majority is no, they do not believe a significant number of under 18s would play the game.

77. The majority accept the point made by Mr Robertson that we must distinguish between film and game. They agree that there is a distinction and that a game is very much less likely to have an imitative effect than a film. In the game, the gap between fantasy and reality is more persuasive. The majority asked themselves the question whether the residue of awareness built up by playing the game would affect people in everyday life. They thought not but are acutely conscious that they are mature adults. We were asked to consider the game on its merits, which we did. While of the opinion that 18 is the correct classification for the particular game, the majority consider the game is up against the limit of acceptability and the decision should not be regarded as a precedent. We would wish that in future, every game should be considered on its own contents and merits (or otherwise).

78. The majority also has had regard that responsible Boards in Australia and New Zealand consider a 15+ certificate is appropriate. Of course, the company is not asking for such a certificate, being content with an 18 classification. Other countries survive without these barriers but, clearly, in ours we are concerned as to the effect upon our children; the 9.0 pm "watershed" on television is an example of this.

79. The majority take all these matters into account and that reliance should be placed upon the good sense of parents and accept the undertaking by the company that it is prepared to put a parental lock on the game.

CONCLUSION

By a majority of 3 to 2 we recommend Carmageddon should be given an 18 Certificate with a parental lock on the game.

John Wood
20th November 1997

EUROPEAN MULTI-MEDIA CONFERENCE,
on
STANDARDS IN SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT
24th - 27th September 1997

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, 24th September 1997 13.00 – 17.30

12.30 Buffet Lunch

Coffee or tea will be served halfway through all morning and afternoon sessions.

14.00 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

James Ferman – Conference Chairman

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

A chance for delegates to introduce themselves and give an account of their organisation's experience since the last European Conference in Paris in June 1996.

Topics of interest would include the following:

- a) Difficult or controversial films or TV programmes
- b) Public response to media issues
- c) Government interventions
- d) New legislation, if any
- e) Changes within the regulatory organisation or system

As this is an introductory session, there will be time to return to these issues later in the Conference, so please limit each organisation's contribution to 15 minutes, including 5 minutes for questions.

(The Review of the Year will be completed on Thursday morning.)

17.30 Session ends

PRESS CONFERENCE

18.00 Refreshments on BBFC Roof Terrace

DAY 2: THURSDAY, 25th September 1997 10.00 – 17.30

10.00 Morning Session

REVIEW OF THE YEAR (Concluded)

12.00 **VIDEO CLASSIFICATION – Viewing in the Home**

13.00 **Buffet Lunch**

14.15 Afternoon Session

YOUTH PROTECTION

1) Film Categories

- a) Categories for young children - 6, 8, or 'PG'
- b) Teenage categories - how many and where should they be set?
- c) At what age does adulthood begin?
- d) Is a separate pornography category useful?

2) TV Scheduling Times

How should television scheduling reflect the film categories?

(Charts will be provided listing all the categories and TV timings currently used by European countries. We have a record of these from previous conferences, but it would be useful to have them again as soon as possible in case there have been any changes.)

16.00 **CLASSIFYING PROBLEM FILMS**

Titles to be suggested by delegates, together with the categories awarded to them in your country and the times they would be shown on television?

17.30 Session Ends

17.30 Refreshments on BBFC roof terrace

18.30 **SCREENING OF A FILM FOR DISCUSSION – Basement Theatre**

20.30 **Buffet Supper at the BBFC**

DAY 3: FRIDAY, 26th September 1997

09.30 – 17.30

10.00 Morning Session

SCREEN VIOLENCE

Reflections on last night's film

Defining the problem?

Quantity of violence, intensity of the violence, nature of the violence

- 1) Is it justified?
- 2) Is it necessary?
- 3) Where do our sympathies lie? With the victim or the aggressor?

Who are we protecting, and why does it matter?

- 1) Is screen violence bad for children?
- 2) Is it bad for teenagers?
- 3) Is it bad for society?

How shall we respond?

Classification? Cuts? Rejection?

12.00 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

13.00 Buffet Lunch

14.15 Afternoon Session

PORNOGRAPHY

Are common standards possible?

Where do you draw the line?

Trans-frontier television

15.15 VIDEO GAMES and DIGITAL MEDIA

16.30 THE INTERNET

17.30 Session Ends

20.00 CONFERENCE DINNER (Au Jardin des Gourmets, Greek Street, W1)

10.00 Morning Session

EUROPEAN HARMONISATION

What have we got in common?

Where do we differ?

How important are these differences?

DIVERGENCES < > CONVERGENCES

Age categories

Cuts

Social or government mandates

Composition of Boards or Commissions (elected representatives, civil servants, experts, professional examiners, industry self-regulators)

THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 10 guarantees freedom of expression . . .
freedom to receive and impart information and ideas . . .
subject to such restrictions as are necessary . . .
for the prevention of crime or disorder . . .
for the protection of health or morals . . .

AREAS OF POTENTIAL FUTURE COLLABORATION

Media Education

Research

Consumer advice

European Classification of Multi-lingual Digital Video Discs

A European Database

Next Year's European Conference

1995 - Berlin.

1996 - Paris

1997 - London

1998 - ?

Volunteers are invited to host the 1998 Conference.

Please notify the BBFC before the September Conference.

13.30 Buffet Lunch

14.30 Conference Ends

Policy Paper: Children's Films at 'U'

British Board of Film Classification

CHILDREN'S FILMS AT U – A Policy Statement

1. In the 'U' category, a children's film will offer wholesome entertainment for a broad family audience. It may be – but is not necessarily – intended for younger children to view alone.
2. In addition to uncontentious material, we should aim to pass at 'U' any film that may have a positive and helpful influence on the development of younger children.
3. In the 'U' category, we assume that 'younger children' refers to children between the ages of four and seven.
4. In judging what constitutes 'wholesome entertainment', we will take into account issues relating to morality, manners and intensity.

The following list offers tests for children's films at 'U' under the headings morality, manners and intensity.

Morality

- a) Where the film portrays a conflict between good and evil, does good eventually triumph over evil?
- b) Does the film avoid showing violence as an automatic solution to problems?
- c) Is verbal aggression discouraged?
- d) Unless clearly comic or fantastic, does the film avoid celebrating violence and weaponry as a principal pleasure?
- e) Does the film offer positive messages about loyalty and camaraderie, particularly amongst children?
- f) Are positive messages given against prejudice and discrimination?
- g) Do children overcome adversity?
- h) Are children rewarded for pro-social behaviour?

Manners

- i) Do children display anti-social or subversive behaviour except in response to clear provocation?
- j) Does the film avoid any overt focus on sexual behaviour, language or innuendo?
- k) Is offensive language limited to infrequent and unremarkable use of the mildest swearwords, for example 'God', 'damn', 'hell' or 'bloody'?
- l) Is the use of other mild swear words limited to exceptional circumstances?
 - i) In a film which is otherwise entirely suitable for a 'universal audience', there must be very strong arguments to justify more than very mild bad language.

- ii) Where insufficient argument for retention of language is forthcoming, the Board should try to secure a cut or re-dub if classifying the film 'PG' would potentially deter the film's natural audience.
- iii) Retention of mild swearing in the 'U' category calls for the use of Consumer Advice.

Intensity

- m) Does the film have a happy ending, and is emotional security established for the child at the film's end?
- n) Is the emotional stress or tension provoked by the film resolved in a way that is easily understood by a younger child, for example through positive identification with sympathetic characters?
- o) Are sensitive or problematic themes treated in a manner which will make them accessible and understandable to younger children?
- p) Does the film avoid verbal aggression or humiliation unless clearly comic or strongly contextualised?
- q) Are moments of realistic horror or violence sufficiently rare or brief to be both contained by the story and to offer resolution?
- r) Are stronger sequences (including 'action' sequences) balanced by comic or reassuring context or interruption?
- s) Do episodes of 'reassurance' exceed episodes of 'instability'?
- t) Where moments of strong, potentially overwhelming music, sound or special effects are designed to heighten tension, are those moments brief?

Rejection Letter on *Boy Meets Girl*

Mr Ray Brady
Kino-Eye Limited
127 Grandison Road
London
SW11 6LT

Dear Mr Brady,

Video Recordings Act 1984: BOY MEETS GIRL

As you know, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 laid down an additional test which the Board must now apply in determining whether or not a video work is suitable for a classification certificate to be issued to it under the Video Recordings Act 1984. In summary, the new clause directs the Board to have special regard (amongst other relevant factors) not only to the likelihood of the video work's being viewed in the home, but also to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society by the manner in which the film deals with criminal behaviour, illegal drugs, violence, horror or sex. The term 'potential viewers' means any persons likely to view the video, including under-age viewers, if a certificate is granted. This clarifies the test of suitability for viewing in the home rather than introducing a fundamentally different approach, since the question of harm and anti-social influence has always been at the heart of Board policy where cuts or the refusal of a certificate are at issue.

Board policy has made us exceptionally cautious in dealing with sustained depictions of sadistic torture. Indeed, no feature-length film has ever before been classified in which nearly 90% of the running time takes place in a torture chamber. A cinema certificate was felt to be possible for BOY MEETS GIRL only because of the particular circumstances of viewing in a cinema, where audience age is enforced at the box office and where viewers will, for the most part, see the film from beginning to end as the film-maker intended. In such conditions, we concluded, an adult audience was likely to accept that this was a first film by an energetic young film-maker which attempted much, whatever its shortcomings in terms of achievement. And the risk of harm being minimised, it might even have produced some useful feedback.

Video, however, is a different matter. It is widely acknowledged that in many homes there is no reliable control of audience age; nor is there any guarantee that viewers will watch the scenes of torture in the context of the film as a whole. Indeed, where the dialogue fails to hold the attention of viewers, as it may easily do in this case, they may turn instead to mere sensation-seeking, viewing scenes out of context - perhaps repeatedly - for the sadistic frisson they offer. Furthermore, those most likely to reject the torture scenes on moral grounds (as you say was your intention) are precisely the ones least likely to view the work as a whole, leaving its detailed perusal to those who may find themselves attracted to the infliction of pain or injury for its own sake.

The Board has for many years taken the view that there is no such thing as a taboo subject, since intelligent or sensitive treatment may justify the most disturbing or controversial material. With a subject like rape or torture, however, the validity of the treatment has normally depended on the extent to which the film adopts a humane and compassionate viewpoint that aligns itself with the victim rather than the aggressor. In this case, and for most of the film, the male victim is thoroughly unsympathetic, and the validity of the film rests for a time on the supposition that one

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is watching a feminist piece in which torture is merely a narrative device for exploring unacceptable male behaviour. But this theme is a red herring. So, too, is the idea that the torturer might be motivated by a desire to turn the tables on society's victimisers. In the "One Last Thought" section, the second victim is a young black woman who is in no way deserving of retribution. This is torture for torture's sake, and it mingles violence, horror and sex in a manner which is difficult to justify in a medium intended for viewing in the home.

Your argument for the morality of the film rests on the assumption that, when torture is seen for what it is, viewers will invariably reject it. The history of the 20th century does not bear you out. It was the sadistic content of video nasties which led the courts to find so many of them depraving and corrupting. In the cinema, perhaps, the responses of viewers might be inhibited by the social setting, but in the home, individuals are free to respond to the screen far more intimately and dangerously. Few societies have had much difficulty recruiting torturers, nor does human nature necessarily turn away from evil. The risk of confirming sadistic tastes or reinforcing sadistic impulses is therefore a real one, and is crucial to any consideration of harm to potential viewers or, through their behaviour, to society. You may argue that only a minority of viewers are vulnerable to such influences, but that minority must have significance given the gravity of the behaviour in question, particularly when such appetites may be whetted by sensational publicity.

This video focuses unrelentingly on the process of torture, mental as well as physical, including mutilation, sexual violation and evisceration, all in full view of the camera. If the genders were reversed, there would be no question of a certificate, but the gender switch is irrelevant, as is every other key we are offered to the mind of the torturer. She is simply evil incarnate, inexplicable and ultimately pointless, which is presumably why you have described and marketed the work as a horror film. The black comedy tone prevents our empathising with the characters or identifying with their human failings; but nor is there that compensating sense of dread at the realisation of our own vulnerability which the best horror films provide. Instead, we are confronted with the obscene consequences of violence on the assumption that such violence will not be experienced as pleasurable. With a horror video, this seems unlikely. At any rate, the defence of context is untenable when it comes to watching torture scenes repeatedly in the home.

The Board would never seek to condemn a work simply for not measuring up to its ambitions. But the right to fail is called into question when a film exploits representations of sadism with no coherent moral justification or context. In such circumstances, the Board takes the view that the video is unsuitable for viewing in the home where it might be seen by the young and vulnerable and where it carries the very real risk that it could have a corrosive effect on the values and/or behaviour of certain potential viewers. On those grounds, a video certificate is refused.

We have considered whether cuts could make the work acceptable, but have failed to come up with an adequate solution. You are of course free to re-edit the work yourself in order to submit it in a different form, but we can offer no assurances that such re-editing would be successful.

Yours sincerely,

James Ferman
Director

BBFC

Certification Symbols For Video Packaging & Publicity

Symbols only, for use on :

Cassettes: front and spine of case
and top and spine of cassette
Discs: front of disc sleeve
and label on disc itself

Symbol plus explanatory statement for use on :

Cassettes: reverse side of case
Discs: reverse side of sleeve



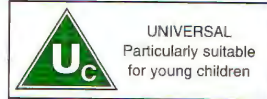
GREEN : 100% Yellow + 100% Cyan



UNIVERSAL
Suitable for all



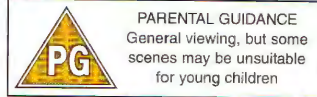
GREEN : 100% Yellow + 100% Cyan



UNIVERSAL
Particularly suitable
for young children



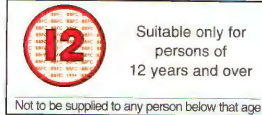
YELLOW: 100% Yellow + 30% Magenta



PARENTAL GUIDANCE
General viewing, but some
scenes may be unsuitable
for young children



RED : 80% Yellow + 100% Magenta

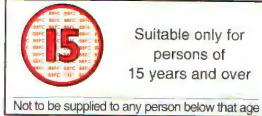


Suitable only for
persons of
12 years and over

Not to be supplied to any person below that age



RED : 80% Yellow + 100% Magenta

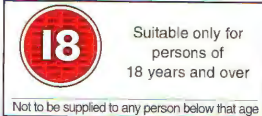


Suitable only for
persons of
15 years and over

Not to be supplied to any person below that age



RED : 80% Yellow + 100% Magenta

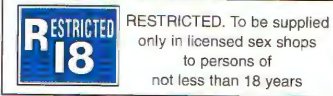


Suitable only for
persons of
18 years and over

Not to be supplied to any person below that age



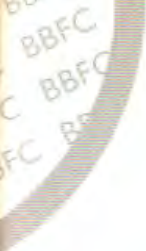
BLUE : 100% Cyan + 40% Magenta



RESTRICTED. To be supplied
only in licensed sex shops
to persons of
not less than 18 years

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

3 Soho Square
London W1V 6HD
Telephone 0171 439 7961
Facsimile 0171 287 0141




BBFC

Consumer Advice Symbols

For Reverse Side of Video Packaging

Consumer Advice is set in Helvetica Condensed


For 'PG' there are 38 characters Including spaces (upper and lower case)

		PARENTAL GUIDANCE General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children
THEME / OTHER	Sex comedy, relationships	
LANGUAGE	Infrequent mild swearing	
SEX / NUDITY	Brief nudity, some sexual references	
VIOLENCE	Occasional, mild, comic	

PG' width only

Consumer Advice is set in Helvetica Condensed

For 'U', '12', '15' and '18' there are 29 characters Including spaces (upper and lower case)

		Suitable only for persons of 15 years and over
Not to be supplied to any person below that age		
THEME / OTHER	Action, spies, hostages	
LANGUAGE	Occasional, coarse	
SEX / NUDITY	Infrequent, moderate	
VIOLENCE	Frequent, strong, heroic	

'U', '12', '15', '18' width only

For Spine Label on Cassette

Title			THEME / OTHER	Western, law and order
BBFC Reg. No.			LANGUAGE	Infrequent, coarse
			SEX / NUDITY	Occasional, mild
			VIOLENCE	Occasional, moderate, bloody

The black and white symbols below are for designers' and printers' guidance and should only be used in conjunction with the correct colour specifications.

THEME / OTHER	
LANGUAGE	
SEX / NUDITY	
VIOLENCE	

YELLOW	100% yellow
BLUE	50% cyan
PURPLE	50% magenta · 40% cyan
RED	80% magenta · 80% yellow

BBFC

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