

Board Report

T01/562



Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995
CLASSIFICATION BOARD

DETAILS OF THE FILM:

FILE No T01/562
Processing Date: 1/3 Mar 2001

Title: THE PLEDGE
Producer: SEAN PENN/ ELIE SAMAHA/ MICHAEL FITZGERALD
Director: SEAN PENN
Production Co: MORGAN CREEK PRODUCTIONS FRANCHISE PICTURES/ CLYDE IS HUNGRY PRODUCTIONS
Country Of Origin: USA
Applicant: ROADSHOW FILM DISTRIBUTORS PTY LTD
Language: ENGLISH
Format: 35 mm
Duration: 123 MINUTE(S)
Version: ORIGINAL
Colour/B&W: Colour
Application Type: dual PE + S/H 121-150 mins

PROCEDURE:

The Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995, and the Classification Guidelines approved by the standing Committee of Attorneys General, are followed when classifying films.

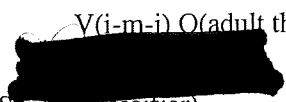
Item Viewed: YES **Viewing Date:** 1/3 Mar 2001
Written submissions: NO **Oral submissions:** NO

MATERIAL CONSIDERED:

In classifying this item regard was had to the following:

(i) The Application YES
(ii) A written synopsis of the item YES
(iii) The Item YES
(iv) Other NO

DECISION

(1) **Classification:** R 18 +
(2) **Consumer Advice:** ADULT THEMES
MEDIUM LEVEL VIOLENCE
(3) **Key:** V(i-m-i) O(adult themes)
(4) **Ratified By:**  613101
(Senior Classifier)

Classification Board Decision: **THE PLEDGE**

SYNOPSIS:

A retired chief of Police makes a solemn promise to catch the killer of a young girl found raped and murdered in a forest.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION:

In the Board's majority view this film warrants an R classification for adult themes and medium level violence that, in accordance with Part 3 of the Films Table of the National Classification Code, are unsuitable for a minor to see.

This film warrants an R classification as it requires an adult perspective.

In arriving at the decision the Board considered the criteria set out in the National Classification Code and the guidelines for the Classification of Films and Videotapes, Amendment No.2, April 1999. The Board also took into account the matters contained in Section 11 of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer games) Act 1995 (the Classification Act):

- the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults; and
- the literary, artistic or educational merit of the film; and
- the general character of the film; and
- the persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

Adult Themes

The theme of a murderous paedophile stalking very young blonde females to rape and murder carries a very high degree of intensity but it is justified within the context of the narrative and is not exploitative. There is also a detailed depiction of suicide in this film.

At 31 mins a mentally handicapped American Indian who has been arrested for the murder and rape of a young girl is led into a holding cell by a police officer. He gains control of the officer's handgun and places it into his mouth. In a medium shot, full length visual he pulls the trigger in an act of suicide. Blood splatters onto the wall behind him. The man slides slowly down the heavily blood smeared wall and in a post action visual sits motionless with blood covering his upper torso.

The theme of suicide carries a high degree of intensity and this detailed depiction cannot be considered discreet. Hence, in the majority of the Board's view this depiction cannot be accommodated within the MA classification for adult themes as the Guidelines state that 'the treatment of themes with a high degree of intensity should be discreet' at the MA level.

Violence

This film contains strong depictions of realistic violence. Depictions with a high degree of impact are not gratuitous or exploitative. There is a cumulative impact in which the scenes of violence combine to deliver an impact which may be offensive to some members of the adult community.

At 15 mins a post action visual is shown of what appears to be the heavily bloodied body of a young child slumped over a log in a forest. A close up of the child's bloodied face is shown.

At 46 mins several still colour photos of a young girl who has been raped and murdered are shown. She is heavily bloodied and battered in each picture.

At 100 mins, in a brief visual, a very young female is shown to be heavily bloodied and motionless with legs splayed and seated below a man who is also bloodied and holding a blood covered scythe.

In the minority of the Board's view this film can be accommodated at an MA classification as the film's conceptual strength and scenes of violence require a mature, rather than an adult perspective. In the minority of the Board's view the treatment of adult themes with a high degree of intensity are discreet and depictions of violence with a high degree of impact are infrequent and are not prolonged or gratuitous.

This film contains material that may be offensive to some sections of the adult community. It is unsuitable for those under 18 years of age and warrants an R classification.

