

Board Report

T02/726



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

DETAILS OF THE FILM:

FILE No T02/726
Processing Date: 15-Mar-2002

Title: THE SALTON SEA
Version: ORIGINAL
Format: 35 mm
Duration: 103 MINUTE(S)
Producer: KEN AGUADO/ FRANK DARABONT/ ERIQ LA SALLE/ BUTCH ROBINSON
Director: D.J. CARUSO
Production Co:
Country Of Origin: USA
Language: ENGLISH
Colour/B&W: Colour
Application Type: dual PE + S/H 91-120 mins
Applicant: ROADSHOW FILM DISTRIBUTORS PTY LTD

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:** 15-Mar-2002
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: DRUG USE
MEDIUM LEVEL VIOLENCE
(3) Key: V(i-m-j) O(drug use)
(4) Ratified By:  2013102
(Senior Classifier)

SYNOPSIS:

A man who witnesses the coldblooded killing of his wife by corrupt policemen goes undercover as a drug addict and dealer in order to avenge her death.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION:

When making classification decisions the Classification Board (the Board) is required to follow the procedure set out in the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (the Act). The Board is required to apply the National Classification Code and the Classification Guidelines, while taking into account the matters set out in section 11 of the Act.

In accordance with part 3 of the Films Table of the National Classification Code, in the Board's opinion this film warrants an "R" classification for material which is unsuitable for those under 18 years of age as it deals with issues or contains depictions which require an adult perspective.

In the Board's view although some of the depictions in this film may warrant a lower classification if taken independently, they also contribute a cumulative impact to those depictions which do warrant an "R" classification. In particular, the inextricable link between the two classifiable elements of note, drug use and violence, add to the need for an adult perspective for this film.

Drug Use

Drug use is shown in this film but is neither gratuitously detailed, promoted nor encouraged. The film commences with a seven minute sequence outlining the history of illicit and pharmaceutical drug use (particularly Methadrine, Dexadrine, Benzadrine) including images of household drug labs and chemically intoxicated persons. It leads up to a contemporary scene taking place within a drug party. The party takes place within a residential house and the camera pans across the various participants who are on drug highs. There is drug paraphernalia seen on tables and floors, and in the background, a female smoking a pipe. Two women are seen preparing a white powder, a man is seen implicitly inhaling another white powder from a table. The narrator speaks of how the party was three to four days of unending drug use. At seven minutes there is a close up from beneath a glass table of a male shaking and snorting some white powder (it is uncertain as to whether it is heroin or cocaine). A male next to this male leans over to snort the powder only to discover it is gone and gets aggravated.

2. 8mins - Following this scene, two of the partygoers visit another male who, in his drug addled state, is convinced that there is a spider on his arm. He is quite manic and holds a spray can above his arm as he babbles incoherently. He sprays his arm and swears profusely as he jumps around spraying the rest of his body. As this is happening, his female partner's lower body can be seen protruding from between the nearby bed's mattresses. She is yelling and after her partner's spraying frenzy, he bounces on the bed and yells at her to stop. The parties then engage in a drug deal.

3. 11mins - A male and a female snort some white powder (it is uncertain as to whether it is heroin or cocaine) from a table, the powder is seen disappearing into their nostrils. There are then various scenes of the partying within the house before the scene cuts to a visual of a female snorting white powder and another female implicitly doing the same below screen.

4. 31mins - A male implicitly snorts some cocaine/ heroin below screen. He is seen getting high from the drugs.

5. 33mins - Two men are seated in a car. They are seen inhaling an unidentified drug from a puffer.

In addition to these scenes, the film's plot revolves around the lives of drug dealers and there are frequent depictions of individuals whose behaviour is drug affected. In the Board's view the cumulative effect of the depictions cited above plus the constant drug references are sufficiently high in impact and detail to warrant restriction to adults.

Violence

Depictions of violence in this film are, as stated above, linked with the predominating drug theme in this film and as such, their impact is heightened. Depictions with a high degree of impact are not gratuitous or exploitative. There is some exchange of gunfire which can be accommodated at a lower classification. Depictions of note are as follows:

1. 16mins - There is a top down long shot of a male dead on the ground, his body in a pool of blood. The implication is that he either fell or was pushed from, the top of the nearby apartment building, possibly in a drug affected state. The camera cuts across to show his partner and young daughter sobbing on the building's rooftop and then back to the dead man's body. The blood flowing from the body is seen dripping into a nearby drain.

2. 53mins - A male is held against a wall with an angry badger in a cage pressed against his body. He is told to reveal certain information, the threat being that the badger will attack his genitals. His terror is palpable as the badger is seen gradually opening the cage door and a gun is pointed at his head.

3. 61mins - Gunmen storm a house. There are bloodied bullet entry wounds visible as they launch a hail of gunfire.

4. 80 mins - There is a fight between two groups of men. There is blood spray and injury detail as men are killed, including post action visuals of their bloodied dead bodies.

5. 83mins - An injured male crawls towards his injured wife. A highly stylised depiction of blood is seen dripping into a large blood pool. This flashback sequence then continues as it cuts back to the present. The injured male implicitly shoots both of the two cops who have just entered the room. There is no injury detail. The shooter tells one of his victims that he knows that he was responsible for his wife's death and that he is wrecking vengeance. A gun is placed at the cop's head and there is a

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flashback to a gun placed by the cop at the woman's head before he killed her. The scene then flashes back to the present. The man holding the gun is sobbing as he recalls his wife's death. The cop implicitly stabs the gun wielder, they struggle and the cop gains control of the gun, pointing it at his former attacker. The latter man has a flashback recollecting how many bullets he has fired from his gun as he attempts to assess his risk of being killed. The flashback involves a body count (up to six) and re-shows each of the deaths. There is blood spray and injury detail identical to the footage from five minutes earlier. The cop coldbloodedly fires but as there are no bullets left, the man is not injured. The other male grabs a nearby syringe and implicitly stabs the cop in his neck. The syringe is seen embedded in his neck as the man slowly injects the cop with the unidentified fluid. The cop gargles and gasps for breath. The other male holds a gun and contemplates killing himself but cannot bring himself to do so. The gargling noises of the dying cop are in the background. He implicitly fires eight times at the cop below screen, the camera focusing on the other man's face.