



Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995

CLASSIFICATION BOARD

CLASSIFICATION OF A FILM:

DETAILS OF THE FILM:

FILE NO: 98/3317
Processing Date(s): 3.3.99

Title: 8MM

Producer: Gavin Polone, Judy Hofflund, Joel Schumacher
Director: Joel Schumacher

Production Co:

Country of Origin: USA

Applicant: Columbia Tristar Films **Version:**

Running Time: 123mins

Format : 35mm

Colour/B&W: Colour **Language:** English

Dubbed: **Subtitled:**

Application Type: PE + SH

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.

Film viewed: YES
Screening date: 9.2.99
Written submissions: NO
Oral submissions: NO

MATERIAL CONSIDERED:

In classifying this film regard was had to the following:

- (i) The application YES
- (ii) A written synopsis of the film YES
- (iii) The film YES
- (iv) Other NO

DECISION:

(1) FILM CLASSIFICATION: R

(2) CONSUMER ADVICE: Medium level violence/ Adult themes/ Sexual references

(3) RATIFIED BY:  5/3/99

(Senior Classifier)

SYNOPSIS: Tom Wells (Nicolas Cage) is hired by a wealthy widow to investigate the verity of a “snuff” film her late husband kept hidden in his private safe. He begins the investigation with scepticism for its authenticity, however, he slowly uncovers the truth.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION:

In the Board’s view this film warrants an R classification for depictions of violence, adult themes and sexual references which require an adult perspective.

The film is a strong portrayal of violence and pornography and may be offensive to some sections of the adult community. The concept of secretly traded “snuff” films is an urban myth that forms the basis for the film’s plot. Sexual violence is always given careful consideration by the Classification Board and the board notes the video clips of women being tortured and killed are implied and not detailed. The film is comparable to “Seven” (#95/8269- classified R for medium level violence) with a similar dark tone, both having been written by Andrew Kevin Walker

VIOLENCE:

Strong depictions of realistic violence are shown but depictions with a high degree of impact are not gratuitous or exploitative. Sexual violence is implied and not detailed.

11mins. Tom uncomfortably grimaces whilst watching the alleged ‘snuff’ film. Brief visuals of the film (grainy 8mm quality) show a man in a leather mask grabbing a long bladed knife and holding it towards a young woman (later identified as being 16 years old). She is dressed in underwear and a bra. Alternating strobe effect and skewed camera angles obscure the detail but clearly the film suggests a brutal killing with chaotic slashing scenes and bloody close ups. This scene is repeated in flashback at 19 mins.

75mins. Tom is punched, kicked, knocked down and threatened with a crossbow. Heavily bruised and beaten, Max (Tom’s aid) is tied to a cross and threatened, “We will fuck him and film it! If that’s not enough we are going to come after your family”. Later at 82 mins Max’s throat is explicitly slashed with a quick cut across the neck leaving a blood trail. A fight ensues leading to man being shot in the chest with a crossbow leaving a bloody wound and a second man is shot in the neck leaving a bloody neck wound. A third man is implicitly stabbed in the stomach with post action visuals of a bloody protruding knife.

101mins. A man (Eddie) involved in the snuff movie is beaten up by Tom and is then tied to a post with a cable around his throat. Tom cannot decide what to do and calls the (snuff) victims’ mother saying, “I found them...I can hurt them - give me your permission”. Eddie goads Tom saying, “Do it you faggot...pull the fucking trigger you

pansy bitch". There are various close ups as Tom pushes the gun into Eddie's forehead, eyes and near his mouth. Eddie licks the barrel of the gun in one part. Tom hesitates and at 105 mins he vigorously pistol whips Eddie (below screen) before implicitly setting fire to the body. As the flames grow they illuminate Tom's blood splattered face. He walks outside with a shaky, blood soaked hand.

110-117mins. Tom corners the killer on the snuff film, a masked man with the moniker, "Machine". A punch/wrestle fight ends with Tom pinned on the ground with a knife at his throat. "Machine" gloats, "You know what the best part of killing is....the look...they can't believe its happening". The fight continues with Tom gaining the upper hand. He orders "Machine" at gunpoint to take off the mask. "Machine" does so revealing a "Joe Average" who fumbles to put his glasses on. The normality of the man is frightening and he anticipates Tom's shock saying, "What did you expect, a monster? You can't get your mind around it can you...I wasn't beaten by Mommy or abused by Daddy...why do I do the things I do? Because I like them". "Machine" lunges at Tom and is implicitly stabbed in the chest with a post action visual of the bloody knife protruding. Tom staggers away.

ADULT THEMES:

The treatment of themes with a very high degree of intensity is not exploitative. The adult themes of sex and violence, loss and cruelty are combined with sick deviancy. The treatment is strong with graphic visuals and the subject matter requires an adult perspective. The widow of the rich industrialist who commissioned the snuff film asks Tom to ally her fears, "The girl appears to have been murdered...all I know is if this atrocity is false...I want the truth...tell me the poor girl wasn't killed". At 89 minutes Tom calls her and confirms her worse fears, whereupon she commits suicide (not seen). When Tom confronts the lawyer who had arranged for the films making he asks for an answer which is the crux of the film, "Why did he do it?" He replies, "he did it because he could, what other reason were you looking for?".

The victim's mother is shown struggling with her loss holding onto some faint hope her daughter may be alive. The last she heard of her daughter was the all American dream, running off to Hollywood to be a 'star'. After finding out the truth Tom asks her if she would rather know that something horrible had happened or live with the doubt? The mother replies, "I need to know". The murder of Eddie serves to galvanise Tom's path and to elaborate on the death of the girl. Eddie is the sleazy casting agent running "celebrity films", the agency where the murdered girl tried to get her Hollywood start. Tom had earlier watched (medium distance visual from across road) as Eddie, in a scene

he must have played out hundreds of times before, persuades a young starlet to implicitly perform fellatio. Later Tom abducts and threatens to kill Eddie. Eddie however blurts out unrepentantly, "She was nothing...a little piece of pussy off the street...we fed her a bunch of pills and just started cutting her up...she's been dead a long time and no one gives a fuck but you...I buried her body out in the woods". Tom is at the crossroads and calls the mother saying, "your daughter...some men took her and killed her...I can hurt them I want your permission". He later kills Eddie and at the end of the film reads a letter from the mother thanking him, "you were one of only two people who cared about my daughter thank you".

Tom's personal journey nearly destroys him. As Tom begins his investigation a porno clerk warns him "Some images you can't get out of your mind". Tom is shown as a family man with a newborn infant. There are constant back and forward reminders of his home life and he desperately seeks reassurances the further his investigation continues. At the end of his journey, after the killings etc, he staggers home and his last words to his wife are, "Save me"

Another feature of films of this genre is the identity of the killer. Whilst some killers assume mythical proportions eg Hannibal Lector in *Silence of the Lambs* had almost superhuman control of his faculties etc. This killer is not a monster but a bland personality living with his Christian mother, and by his own admission didn't have any infant maladjustment which might explain his behaviour. The message is morally vacuous and chilling, a killer who acted for no reason other than he liked it and a man who ended a girls life for no reason other than he could.

SEXUAL REFERENCES:

Sexual activity is realistically simulated. Verbal references are more detailed than depictions.

A lot of the sexual references could be accommodated in the lower classifications however there is a cumulative impact which considerably ups the ante. The strongest sequence begins at 43mins as Tom begins his investigation of the underground pornography trade, trying to buy a 'snuff' film. At 43 mins Tom & Max visit a house selling a sleazy variety of illegal tapes including bestiality etc... "whatever you want". Their next stop is at an even seedier basement style swap meet with magazines, videos etc laid out on tables whilst trenchcoat "creepers" scuttle around. Tom warily picks up a picture from a batch which is marked "Kids". The picture is not focused upon and the pile appears to be discreet pictures of children with no detail of nudity. A merchant marks his product, "way beyond xxx" and tells Tom he's selling, "extreme bondage,

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rape films, sick shit". Tom is told to "fuck off" when he asks for snuff. As they leave Tom pauses at a darkened room which is showing a black and white 16mm screening of a naked trussed up man (hands tied behind back) bent over whilst a women implicitly inserts a dildo in his anus and spanks him. Various trenchcoat creepers are seen in the audience, bending over implicitly masturbating. From here the pair journey to a hard core dungeon style S&M club with chains, whips and maces hanging from mesh fences. A man in bondage gear laughingly sells Tom a tape saying, "It's the sickest shit you'll ever see!". Later the pair watch the tapes which explicitly portray a woman being forcibly raped and then choked to death. Tom & Max both wince whilst watching and there is a post action visual of the woman wide eyed and dead on the ground. They watch the second film which has a stronger "snuff" scene depicting a woman tied with her hands above her head whilst two men slap and roughhouse her. One man grabs a machete and slashes at her. She struggles violently and screams and there is copious blood flow. There is a post action visual of the bloodied woman slumped forward, implicitly dead. Tom & Max, however, discover a continuity flaw in the tapes and discover they are fakes, albeit realistically ones. The violent effect is mitigated once the truth is revealed but, nonetheless, the scenes showed strong images of sexual violence.

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NAME:

[REDACTED]

SIGNATURE:

[REDACTED]

FILM VIEWED BY: VGG/RT/JO

DETAILS OF VOTING:

unanimous

Key: V(ihj)
O(adult themes)
O(sexual references)

[REDACTED]