



British Board of Film Classification 3 Soho Square London W1D 3HD t:020 7440 1570 f:020 7287 0141 <http://www.bbfc.co.uk>

## **Code of Practice for the video/DVD release of different versions of a film at different classification categories in the UK**

### **Rationale**

Until January 2004 BBFC classification policy did not allow two versions of a title to be distributed if their classification certificates do not match. Over the past few years there has been a move towards Distributors releasing alternative versions of more classic product. These may comprise 'Director's Cuts', which contain new material not present in the version originally submitted to the BBFC, or simply uncut versions of films that contain material previously cut to obtain a lower certificate (at the cinema and/or on video). However in a number of instances these would require a higher age rating than the original, which the BBFC had not permitted. The key concerns have been that two versions of the same title would lead to customer and retailer confusion, possible breaches of the Video Recordings Act and loss of parental confidence in the classification system.

The BBFC has now relaxed this policy, providing the packaging of cassettes/DVDs can reliably deliver certain essential information. The BVA with the BBFC has drafted a code of practice relating to the design of packaging for different versions of films at different classification categories. This code will apply to (i) versions of films containing additional material not previously submitted to the BBFC, (ii) versions of films restoring material previously cut by the BBFC for video/DVD release to obtain a lower classification, (iii) versions of films intended for video/DVD which include new material or restore material originally cut from the theatrical release, by the distributor or the BBFC, to obtain a lower certificate. The code need only be observed if the additional material will raise the classification category of the work beyond previously classified versions. It need not be observed if the 'Director's Cut' or alternative version will remain at the same classification category as the original. This code of practice should be adopted by all UK video distributors.

All alternative versions of works that will be released with a higher certificate than the original should, for the purposes of product packaging, be viewed as new film entities and not extensions of the original.

This, it is hoped, will avoid customer and retailer confusion, both in store and at home. All packaging for such releases must differentiate itself, by look and tone, from the original video packaging.

Agents who subscribe to this code of practice are bound by the following guidelines and must undertake to enforce them.



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## Guidelines

- Participating companies will ensure that the packaging for the higher rated version differentiates itself, by look and tone, from the packaging for the lower rated release. In the case of works cut for theatrical release, but which will be released on video/DVD *only* in an uncut version, it will not be necessary to alter the artwork used for the original cinema release. However, it will be necessary for the packaging to inform consumers and retailers that the video/DVD is different from the theatrical version (see below).
- Where a differently rated version of a film is released whilst the original version is still on the shelves, use of original key art, film branding and imagery should be kept to a minimum to avoid consumer confusion.
- Packaging designs will not directly set out to appeal to children below the age to which the relevant classification applies. This includes the use of child related characters, text, imagery and tone of design.
- All packaging will clearly display BBFC certificates and consumer advice panel in line with BBFC policy.
- All packaging for the higher rated version will be clearly labelled to show that this version differs from previous releases. Text must be displayed on the front of the packaging (minimum 3mm height and in a clear contrasting colour) stating that the version 'contains additional material', is an 'alternate version' or similar; or that it is a 'director's cut' (as appropriate). This text must be placed immediately below the title or be incorporated within it. Use of the term 'Special Edition' will not be sufficient.
- Advertising of this product will be suitable to ensure it is not aimed at inappropriate consumers. This means avoiding any provocative reference to the newly inserted footage.
- Trade advertising will contain a warning for retailers when a title is to be available with two different certificates.
- Sales briefs will be sent to all retailers to ensure they are pre-advised when a title is available with two different certificates.
- Disc art will reflect the differences in packaging to help retailers avoid confusion by staff in store where product is not live on display.

## Administration

The above code of practice will be monitored by the BBFC and VSC to ensure all parties are adhering as agreed. Once the BBFC has notified a distributor that a different classification certificate is required for a new version, packaging must be submitted to the BBFC for approval.