

BBFC Board of Classification Meeting

Thursday 9 January 2020

Present:

Patrick Swaffer	President
Kamlesh Patel	Vice President
Murphy Cobbing	Vice President
David Austin	Chief Executive
Dave Barrett	Deputy Chief Executive
Murray Perkins	Policy Director
Craig Lapper (minutes)	Head of Compliance

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising

2. There were no matters arising.

Classification Issues - Violence in animation on the U/PG Border

3. The Board considered a series of clips illustrating violence on the border between U and PG, with a focus on the extent to which mitigating factors such as comedy, fantasy and animation play a part in classification decisions. The Board noted that the Guidelines state that violence at U will normally be very mild, although mild violence may be permitted if it is comedic, animated or wholly unrealistic.

A short compilation of violence was shown from a variety of *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, which are generally classified U. The Board noted that the level of violence, and some of the resulting injury detail, may result in a higher classification in a more realistic context, particularly given the use of household objects. However, the fast-paced slapstick nature of the action, as well as the fact the characters suffer no lasting harm, offers sufficient mitigation for the U classification.

The Board considered clips from three works featuring animated characters that are

based on popular children's toys. They agreed that a large-scale battle in *Playmobil: The Movie* is generalised in nature, rather than focussing on one-on-one combat or particular details of violence. Much of the violence occurs in the background and is mitigated both by comedy and by the use of characters that are very obviously toys. As such it is acceptable at U as very mild fantasy violence and does not feel noticeably different to how children may play with the toys themselves. A clip from *Lego DC Superhero Girls: Supervillain High - Wonder Waitress* features a fight in a kitchen involving kitchen utensils. While the setting is more realistic and domestic, as are the objects used for fighting, the violence occurs between two superhero characters made of LEGO and is reduced in intensity by a series of comic quips. As such it is acceptable at U, albeit that it is more accurately described as mild violence than very mild violence. A clip was considered from *The Lego Ninjago Movie* in which two Lego characters engage in martial arts combat, with a number of heavy blows landed, including from poles. It was noted that, although the characters are based on toys, the 'stop motion' style of earlier Lego films has gradually been abandoned in favour of more 'realistic' movement. While the Board considered whether the duration of the sequence and the strength of some of the impacts might suggest a PG classification, it was accepted that the action occurs within a fantasy setting and is broken up with comic asides. As such, the scene is permissible as mild comic violence at U.

The Board next considered two sequences from *Teen Titans*, in which more recognisably 'human' characters are employed, rather than toys, albeit that the characters are generally 'superheroes'. A clip was shown from *Teen Titans Go! Raven and Friends [Season 1, Episode 8, Arms Race with Legs]*, which includes a stylised emphasis on bones breaking (shown in X-ray style shots) and limbs being severed, although the characters subsequently recover. This episode was classified at the U established by preceding episodes of the series, on the basis that the violence is highly stylised and comic in nature and occurs in the context of a mass superhero brawl. The Board considered that the more specific and detailed nature of the violence, as well as some more gratuitous elements (such as one character standing on another's broken leg), place the episode on the U/PG borderline. This scene was then contrasted with a stronger clip from *Teen Titans Go! To the Movies*, which involves several characters ganging up to inflict a beating on another, who subsequently turns out to be a 'real' person who has been mistaken for a superhero. In spite of the exaggerated and comic tone of the scene, the Board agreed the PG classification issued to the film is correct, given the fact the victim is unable to fight back, the violence inflicted is disproportionate and there is clear sight of injuries sustained, including a black eye and a swollen face.

Two clips were considered featuring blades used in a threatening manner. It was explained that the Guidelines at U state there must be no emphasis on realistic or easily accessible weapons. A clip from *The Secret Life of Pets 2* features an animated monkey throwing magician's knives at an animated rabbit, while a clip from the Russian animation *Quackers* features a man threatening to cut a duck's neck (in a cooking context) with a large kitchen knife. The Board agreed the use of circus paraphernalia in *The Secret Life of Pets 2* is suitably classified at U, given that the knives are unrealistic and used in a circus

context. There is also little emphasis placed on the blades. By contrast, the strong and sometimes close-up emphasis on a more realistic domestic knife in *Quackers* is correctly classified at PG. The Board noted that the duck's placing of a cord around the villain's neck when it attempts to escape is a level of potentially imitable detail that would be unacceptable at U.

Finally, two clips were shown from works in which animation is more realistic and/or blended with live action. It was noted that more realistic styles of animation can challenge the Guideline test that mild violence at U should be 'wholly' unrealistic. A clip from *Peter Rabbit* features a gardener chasing rabbits, including pinning one down using gardening forks. While the feature is classified PG, the Board concluded that this particular sequence is arguably acceptable at U given its light and comic tone. By contrast, the climactic sequence from the *Lion King* remake is correctly classified at PG, given the relatively realistic nature of the CGI animation, the use of tense music, the scooping up and throwing of embers, and the implication - albeit offscreen - that a lion is about to be torn apart by hyenas.

Advisory Panel on Children's Viewing

4. The Board discussed the steps required to refresh the membership of the Advisory Panel on Children's Viewing.

AOB

5. The Board discussed future agendas for Board of Classification meetings.

Date of next meeting: 19 February 2020

