

BBFC Board of Classification Meeting

Tuesday 18 February 2020

Present: Patrick Swaffer President, Murphy Cobbing Vice President, David Austin Chief Executive, Murray Perkins (minutes) Policy Director

Apologies: Kamlesh Patel Vice President, Dave Barrett Deputy Chief Executive, Craig Lapper 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 - Sex at 12 and 15

3. The Board considered a series of clips illustrating sex at the higher end of 12 and at 15.

In a scene from the 12 rated drama *Red Joan*, a couple have sex in a darkened room. The Board noted that while there was brief breast nudity - and that this is less common in sex scenes at 12 - there was no focus on the nudity and the shot changed almost as soon as the breast nudity was visible. The scene continues with brief movement implying sex under blankets. But again the Board agreed that the brevity was in line with the BBFC's Classification Guidelines at 12/12A which allow for nudity in a sexual context and portrayals of sex when both are brief and discreet. Given the low lighting and the greater focus on the relationship than the physical behaviour, there was further mitigation for the limited sexual activity that was presented.

The Board concluded that a scene from the 12A rated film *Vita & Virginia* was similarly sufficiently discreet for that category. In the scene two women kiss before moving to a bed where there is implied masturbation underneath a blanket. In this case, the women also remain semi-clothed and there is no nudity.

A contrasting scene from the 15 rated drama *Disobedience* was considered by the Board. In a longer scene two women have sex which involves implied kissing of breasts, masturbation inside underwear, implied oral sex, dribbling saliva into an open mouth and orgasm. While there is no focus on any nudity, there are closer shots emphasising the behaviour and there is a much greater focus on the mechanics of sex. However, the Board noted that while there is a focus on various sexual acts, none are presented with particularly strong detail and that the scene is in keeping with what is allowed under the guidelines at 15, specifically, that sexual activity may be portrayed, but usually without strong detail.

Two clips were shown from the Netflix feature *After*, which has been rated 12. Both involve the same young adult couple as their relationship evolves. In the first, the couple kiss, the young man's shirt is removed and the jeans of the young woman are pulled down. It is implied the man lies between the woman's legs, but without suggesting any further sexual acts. In a subsequent scene the couple are seen undressing, though without nudity, and then sex is implied as the couple discuss their readiness, a condom is opened, and there is brief gentle thrusting. The sex itself is briefly and discreetly portrayed and the Board noted in particular the focus on consent, care and the respect shown between the two characters, and the further mitigation these elements provided for the depiction of sexual behaviour at the 12 category.

The final clip discussed by the Board was from the 15 rated period drama *Colette*, in which there are several brief shots of a married man and woman individually engaging in an affair with the same woman. While each of the shots are individually brief, there is breast nudity and sexual thrusting in different positions throughout the sequence. Despite the brevity of the moments of sex, the Board agreed that the portrayals were not discreet and noted in particular the effect of the cumulative nature of the different sexual interactions being edited so closely together.

New Business Update

4. The Board were given an update on new business developments, including work to meet UK consumer expectations by having BBFC ratings available on more online services and to increase the coverage of BBFC ratings on those services which the BBFC is already working with. Close cooperative work with the online VoD industry was highlighted, alongside other initiatives to ensure UK consumer needs are best met, including through the use of new technologies and online tools.

Comms/Marketing Update - FH

5. The Board was given a review of marketing and brand development across 2019, including the growth of the BBFC's social media engagement, the success of BBFC podcasts, and relationships with various stakeholders. Plans for 2020 were also covered.

AOB

6. There was a discussion of the recent Government responses to the Online Harms and AVMSD consultations.

Date of next meeting: 12 March 2020