[IE] The Banning and Unbanning of Films

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Ireland's film censorship, notorious for the banning or cutting of thousands of films until the early 1970s, has been much less rigorous and therefore less contentious in recent years. The banning of films like "Natural Born Killers" in 1994 and "Showgirls" in 1995 became the exception. At the end of 1999, release on video of the Danish film, "The Idiots" was banned on the grounds that it included obscene or indecent matter that would tend to deprave or corrupt persons who might view it (Video Recordings Act 1989, s.3).

However, in 1999 also, the film, "A Clockwork Orange", was passed for cinema release after a period of 26 years. The film, which had been banned in 1973, was passed without cuts and given an 18s certificate. In accordance with the Censorship of Films Acts, it could have been resubmitted to the film censor's office as far back as 1980, a period of 7 years following the ban. By that time, however, the director, Stanley Kubrick, had imposed his own ban on it, following years of controversy in the U.K. and claims that it had triggered copycat crimes. Since Britain and Ireland form a single market for film distribution, Kubrick's self-imposed ban extended to Ireland. Following his death last year, the film's distributors, Warner Brothers, negotiated its re-release.

A few months earlier, the British gangster film, "Get Carter", banned in Ireland in 1971, had its first cinema release, although it had been released on video some time earlier and indeed had been shown on British television, which is available in Ireland.

Meanwhile, one of the recommendations of the Film Industry Strategic Review Group, which reported in August 1999 (IRIS 1999-8: 12), that the government impose a levy on cinema-goers to assist the Irish film industry, has been rejected. However, the tax incentives for investing in films (Section 481 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997) (IRIS 1999-8: 12), which had been under threat, have been secured in the Budget for another 5 years.

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