[IE] Film Censor Issues New Ratings Certificates

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The Irish Film Censor, Sheamus Smith, has made changes in two audience classification certificates for films released for cinema exhibition in Ireland. The new 12 PG certificate (replacing the Over 12's certificate) indicates that the film is suitable for persons of twelve years and older and for children under that age, provided they are accompanied by a parent or guardian. The new 15 PG certificate (replacing the Over 15's certificate) indicates that the film is suitable for persons of fifteen years and older and for those under that age, provided that they are accompanied by a parent or guardian. In effect, this transfers a certain amount of responsibility to parents. In addition, the existing General classification (films suitable for a general audience of all ages), PG classification (parental guidance recommended for persons under 12 years of age) and 18 classification (films suitable only for those of 18 years or older), remain in force. The new classifications coincided with the release in Ireland of the film "Pearl Harbor", the first film to be certified 12 PG.

Mr Smith has also dropped the words "Film Censor" (the English-language title of his office) from film certificates, preferring the Irish-language version "Scrúdóir na Scannán" ("Examiner of Films"). The certificates remain bilingual in other respects.

In Ireland, films shown in a public cinema must be preceded by a certificate from the Film Censor, under the Censorship of Films Acts, 1923-1992. In the past, film censorship in Ireland was criticised for being unduly strict. However, the recent changes are typical of a more liberal approach.

The Office of the Film Censor also has responsibility for classification of videos, under the Video Recordings Act, 1989, but the new certificates outlined above do not apply to videos. That Act does not extend to the classification of video games. However, video games distributors recently introduced their own voluntary age-rating system (see IRIS 2001-2: 13).

"New Film Classification Certificates", Information Statement by the Film Censor of 1 June 2001

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