[GB] British Board of Film Classification Publishes New Classification Guidelines

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The British Board of Film Classification is the self-regulatory and co-regulatory body that classifies films, videos on all physical formats (including DVD and Blu-ray Disc) and certain video games, advertisements and trailers. On 13 January 2014, it published new Classification Guidelines after undertaking a large-scale public consultation involving more than 10,000 members of the public. This found a particular concern about the sexualisation of girls and pornography. There was also worry about the content of music videos and the ease of accessibility of online porn. Parents were concerned about risks to vulnerable adolescents including self-harm, suicide, drug misuse and premature access to sexual content.

Changes made to the Classification Guidelines include giving increased weight to the theme and tone of a film or video, particularly around the 12/12A and 15 levels (viewable by children only of that age or above). Increased attention will be paid to the psychological impact of horror, as well as of strong visual details such as gore. For example, in the 12 category (only viewable by children of 12 or more), though individual scenes may be disturbing, the overall tone may not be, and horror sequences should not be frequent or sustained. The consultation found that the public wanted the Board to be stricter on language at the U level (viewable by all) and more flexible about allowing very strong language at 15; the context of bad language, not just its frequency, was the most important factor in the perception of bad language by the public. The new guidelines state that for films rated at U level there must be only infrequent use of very mild bad language; at 15 level there may be strong language and the context may justify the inclusion of very strong language. At the 15 level dangerous behaviour such as hanging, suicide and self-harm should not be portrayed in a way that dwells on detail that could be copied.

On the specific matter of music videos, the guidelines state that classification of a music video will take account of any elements that are of concern to parents, including glamorisation of behaviour that they consider inappropriate. Where music videos are short and self-contained, material may be less likely to be justified by context.

British Board of Film Classification, 'BBFC Launch New Classification Guidelines', 13 January 2014

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http://www.bbfc.co.uk/www.bbfc.co.uk/new-classification-guidelines

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