Directors UK introduces its Directing Nudity and Simulated Sex Guidelines

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Directors UK, the professional association for screen directors, has launched its Directing Nudity and Simulated Sex Guidelines (the Guidelines), purportedly the first of their kind in the UK. However, arguably, they act as a complement to the terms contained in the agreement between the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) and the actor's union, Equity, dated 1 August 2004 as revised on 13 October 2005 (The Agreement).

The Guidelines provide shared professional expectations that apply to everyone involved in making sensitive content, with the aim of becoming standard working practice within the TV and film industry.

The Guidelines provide best practice for directors working with producers, writers, performers, casting directors, wardrobe and make-up, agents and intimacy co-ordinators. An intimacy co-ordinator helps deliver the director's vision in a safe, protective and collaborative way whilst acting as advocate for cast and crew to guard against the risk of exploitation or vulnerability. The Guidelines include rehearsal techniques, scenes of sexual violence, planning shots to adhere to individual contract clauses, and addressing issues that occur on set.

The Guidelines were produced in consultation with Directors UK member directors, industry bodies and professionals from across the disciplines, and are supported by BAFTA, BFI, the Casting Directors' Guild, Equity and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain as well as industry advocacy groups ERA 5050 and TIME'S UP UK.

Susanna White, Directors UK Film Committee Chair said: "The director, as the creative lead on a production, should set the tone for a professional and respectful on-set environment [...] and no member of a cast or crew should ever be put in a position where they feel unsafe, exploited or mismanaged — especially when making sensitive material."

The Guidelines reflect the Agreement's Clause 13(3) which states that "the artist shall be notified before any audition takes place that the actual engagement will involve nudity or simulated sex acts or both." Similarly, Clause 13(4) of the Agreement refers to no artist being required to disrobe entirely or in part after being interviewed for the part, whatever its nature, and no artist being required to

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perform any simulated sex acts. The artist can request an observer at audiences, with other attendees limited to those absolutely necessary, a rule that applies to filming too.

Likewise, before filming, an artist should be notified in writing about the requirement for nudity and its extent, including any simulated sex. Even where an artist agrees to performing a sex scene, they can change their mind and a body double can be used. Regarding any unused material containing nudity, semi-nudity and/or simulated sex, a producer will use his or her best endeavours to ensure it is destroyed.

The UK Directors Guidelines reflect the Agreement but are more prescriptive and encourage co-operation, for instance in the script writing: “Nudity and simulated sex should only be in the script if they are essential to the story.”

The Guidelines consider the dialogue between the director and the artist’s agent, including which part of the body the performer is comfortable about having filmed; the impact of social media; and whether the artist has suffered any trauma in earlier life which may be exacerbated by performing nude/simulated sex scenes.

Another example of the Guidelines' prescriptive approach is: "Plan movement, touch and kisses in advance. When kissing, there should be no ‘tongues’, unless the performers and director agree. Agree on sucking, nibbling, duration, pressure etc.” Each performer is to be given a word to use indicating if, during a scene, they no longer feel safe or comfortable.

After filming a scene, the director should ensure everyone is okay and take the performers' minds back to their real selves by discussing something light, such as their next project. It also recommends that cast and crew be signposted to any aftercare available.

The Guidelines refer to Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, which states that it is a criminal offence to make or distribute child pornography (a child is defined as someone under 18 years of age). Directors are reminded that if they are working on a project that involves some non-explicit or implied sexual content with teenagers or young people, there remains significant regulation around their contribution.

Directors UK Guidelines on Directing Nudity and Simulated Sex

https://www.directors.uk.com/news/directing-nudity-and-simulated-sex-guidance

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