



Australian Government

Classification Review Board

20 February 2009
23-33 MARY STREET
SURRY HILLS, NSW

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| MEMBERS: | The Hon Trevor Griffin (Acting Convenor) Ms Ann Stark Ms Irina Kolodizner |
| APPLICANT | Paramount Pictures Australia |
| INTERESTED PARTIES | None |
| BUSINESS | To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the film <i>Friday the 13th</i> R 18+ (Restricted) with the consumer advice 'High impact horror violence and sex scene'. |

DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION

1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) classified *Friday the 13th* R 18+ with the consumer advice 'High impact horror violence; several sex scenes'

2. Legislative provisions

The *Classification (Publications, Film and Computer Games) Act 1995* (the Act) governs the classification of films and the review of classification decisions. Section 9 of the Act provides that films are to be classified in accordance with the National Classification Code (the Code) and the classification guidelines.

Relevantly, the Code in paragraph 5 of the Table under the heading 'Films' provides that:

Films (except RC films and X 18+ films) that are unsuitable for a minor to see" are to be classified R 18+, and

Films (except RC films, X 18+ films and R 18+ films) that depict, express or otherwise deal with sex, violence or coarse language in such a manner as to be unsuitable for viewing by persons under 15” are to be classified MA 15+.

The Code also sets out various principles to which classification decisions should give effect, as far as possible.

Section 11 of the Act requires that the matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a film include:

- (a) the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults; and
- (b) the literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the computer game; and
- (c) the general character of the computer game, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character; and
- (d) the persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

Three essential principles underlie the use of the *Guidelines for the Classification of Films and Computer Games 2005* (the Guidelines), determined under s 12 of the Act:

- the importance of context
- the assessment of impact, and
- the six classifiable elements – themes, violence, sex, language, drug use and nudity.

3. Procedure

The Review Board met on 20 February 2009 in response to an application for review from Paramount Pictures Australia, received on 12 January 2009. The Review Board determined that the application for review was a valid application.

Three members of the Review Board viewed the 35mm version of *Friday the 13th* on 20 February 2009.

The Review Board considered a written submission and an oral submission, both by Mr Michael Selwyn, Managing Director of Paramount Pictures Australia.

The Review Board then considered the matter.

4. Evidence and other material taken into account

In reaching its decision the Review Board had regard to the following:

- (i) the application for review from Paramount Pictures Australia;
- (ii) a written and oral submissions from Mr Michael Selwyn of Paramount Pictures Australia;
- (iii) the film *Friday the 13th*;

- (iv) the relevant provisions in the Act, the Code and the Guidelines; and
- (v) the Classification Board's report.

5. Synopsis

The film traces a series of murders committed by a masked Jason in the area of Crystal Lake. At the beginning of the film, a group of young adults go camping near Crystal Lake and never return home, after being set upon by Jason. Six weeks later, Clay, the brother of one of the missing camping party, goes to Crystal lake in search of his missing sister, Whitney. During his search, Clay encounters another group of college students staying in a nearby holiday home. All become targets for the serial killer.

6. Findings on material questions of fact

The Review Board found that the film contains aspects or scenes of importance under various classifiable elements:

(a) Themes –

Themes of vengeance, horror and, to a limited extent, drug usage could be discerned in the film. The Review Board was of the view that, while the themes of vengeance and horror are strong, they can be justified by context. Except to the extent of the violence referred to below, these themes can be accommodated in the MA15+ classification.

(b) Violence –

The Review Board concluded that there are a number of instances of violence which, both separately and cumulatively, are high in impact. They include:

- At the beginning of the film, Jason (then a child) approaches his mother's severed head, after she had been beheaded by a camp counsellor (the survivor of his mother's killing spree at Crystal Lake);
- At 18 minutes, as Ritchie walks in the forest, there is a closeup of a cut throat; Amanda is grabbed by a masked man and Ritchie runs towards her in panic. His leg is caught in a trap and there is a closeup of his mangled leg showing flesh, blood and bone detail, accompanied by screaming. Amanda is shown trussed in a sleeping bag suspended from a tree over a camp-fire, writhing and screaming as she burns. She drops into the fire and burns alive. There is a closeup of her burnt face. At 23 minutes, there is another closeup of Ritchie's bloody leg (with a particular focus on bone detail) in the trap – he looks up as a masked man, Jason, swings a machete into his skull where it remains, with blood detail.
- At 40 minutes, a woodcutter returns home, hears creaking floorboards upstairs, arms himself and slowly makes his way upstairs. Jason appears suddenly, armed with a machete. He lashes out at the woodcutter and cuts his neck, blood flowing.
- At 44 minutes, Noah is driving a motorboat on the lake when he is shot through the head with an arrow. The arrow is shown protruding from the back of his head, with a bloody entry wound in his forehead.

- At 47 minutes, Chelsea is hiding under a jetty. Jason approaches along the jetty and suddenly the machete is driven through the jetty into Chelsea's head with such force that, as Jason seeks to withdraw the machete, Chelsea is pulled by the machete in her head up to the base of the jetty boards. There is blood flow.
- At 50 minutes, Jason is shown carrying a body wrapped in a bag. He drops it to the ground and wields the machete to cut off the head. There is blood and bone detail.
- At 63 minutes, Chewie is in a workshop, the window breaks and Jason appears suddenly. Jason grabs Chewie and rams a screwdriver into his neck and up into his mouth. The flesh resists the passage of the screwdriver, adding to the realism of the scene. Blood gushes from the mouth and there is a gurgling sound effect. At 68 minutes, as Lawrence enters the workshop, Chewie is shown hanging upside down from the ceiling.
- At 70 minutes, as Lawrence is running away, Jason hurls an axe at him and it is shown protruding from his back, with blood pouring from the wound as he cries out for help. Jason reaches Lawrence, picks him up, turns him over and pushes him down onto the axe until the axe-head is shown protruding from Lawrence's chest. There is further blood detail.
- At 73 minutes, a young woman, Bree, is caught inside by Jason and is lifted up and suspended from a door by a hook in her back.
- At 74 minutes, a police officer arrives and is attacked by Jason. The officer is shown with a knife protruding from one eye in closeup with blood detail.
- On a nearby country road at night, there are several more acts of violence – at 77 minutes, a young woman's body is thrown through the windscreen of a car and at 78 minutes Trent is stabbed through the back (with the spear protruding from the chest).
- In a prolonged sequence from 86 minutes, Jason and Clay are shown fighting with various implements until Jason pushes Clay into a woodchipping machine, Clay's head moving towards the cutting blades. Clay manages to throw a chain around Jason and Jason is gradually pulled towards the cutter blades. Whitney stabs Jason in the chest with a machete as he lies on the chipper conveyor belt, blood oozing from under Jason's hockey mask.

(c) Language –

Coarse language, such as 'fuck', 'shit' and variations of these terms, is used frequently. The view of the Review Board is that such language can be accommodated in the MA15+ classification.

(d) Sex –

See 'Nudity' in subparagraph (f) below.

(e) Drug Use –

There are several instances of drug usage, particularly in relation to marijuana. The Review Board is of the view that these instances are justified by context and can be accommodated in a category lower than R18+.

(f) Nudity –

The film contains several instances of nudity, including:

- Female breast nudity at 9 minutes, when a young woman bares her breasts for a young male with sexually suggestive movements;
- At 15 minutes, a young male and young female are briefly shown naked in a tent and then by shadow on the wall of the tent, along with thrusting and sound effects;
- At 44 minutes, Chelsea is shown topless on a motor boat and later under a jetty when Jason thrusts a machete through the boards of the jetty into Chelsea's skull, lifting her out of the water as he seeks to withdraw the machete, exposing her bare breasts;
- At 60 minutes, Trent and Bree are shown naked in a bedroom – she is astride Trent and they are shown in various positions from the side and back with sexual dialogue and pelvic thrusting, impliedly reaching orgasm after five minutes of film. No genitalia is shown.

The Review Board concluded that the nudity contained in the film is justified by context and that sexual activity is realistically simulated.

7. Reasons for the decision

The Review Board was of the view that while certain classifiable elements such as drug use could be accommodated under the MA 15+ classification, the level of violence in the film could not be accommodated in a classification lower than R18+. The violence is sustained, realistic and high in impact, and, as such and in accordance with the Guidelines, mandates an R18+ classification for the film.

8. Summary

The Review Board determined that the film should be classified R18+, with the consumer advice 'High impact horror violence; several sex scenes'.