



Australian Government

Classification Review Board

6 August 2008
23-33 MARY STREET
SURRY HILLS, NSW

MEMBERS:	Ms Maureen Shelley (Convenor) The Hon Trevor Griffin (Deputy Convenor) Ms Ann Stark
APPLICANT	Roadshow Films
INTERESTED PARTIES	None
BUSINESS	To review the Classification Board's decision to classify the film <i>Space Chimps</i> PG with the consumer advice 'Mild threatening scenes'.

DECISION AND REASONS FOR DECISION

1. Decision

The Classification Review Board (the Review Board) classified the film 'G', with the consumer advice 'Some scenes may scare young children'.

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 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, X 18+ films, R 18+ films, MA 15+ films and M films) that cannot be recommended for viewing by persons who are under 15 without the

guidance of their parents or guardians are to be classified PG, and all other films are to be classified G.

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 film; and
- (c) the general character of the film, 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 6 August 2008 in response to the receipt of an application from Roadshow Films on 29 July 2008 to determine its validity.

Three members of the Review Board viewed the film on 6 August 2008.

The Review Board heard an oral submission from Mr Brett Rosengarten representing the applicant. This was provided in addition to a written submission.

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) Roadshow Films' application for review
- (ii) Roadshow Films' written and oral submissions
- (iii) the film, *Space Chimps*
- (iv) the relevant provisions in the Act, the Code and the Guidelines, and
- (v) the Classification Board's report

5. Synopsis

This animated film tells the story of three chimpanzees sent into space to recover a probe on a far off planet. They encounter a range of alien creatures and participate in adventures on the way, returning to Earth to fame and glory.

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 – there were very mild themes of bullying and name calling, slavery and confronting personal fears.

(b) Violence – at 22 minutes a green monster, Lord Zartog, dips another green alien in a frozen pool thus immobilizing the creature – later a statuary garden of 20 or so frozen aliens are seen, however eye-movement indicates that they are still alive. Still later all the frozen aliens are released from their immobilised state.

At 24 minutes Titan, the leader of the three space chimps hits his head. At 34 minutes a giant snake head pops out and there is a very mild sense of menace. At approximately 35 minutes a flying puffer fish shoots out spines. At 47 minutes a chimp gets hit with a “rump dart” and pulls it out and keeps running without seeming impairment or shock.

At 49 minutes two chimps enter a dark tunnel with a big headed tiny alien, Kilowatt, whose head glows when she is scared. There is scary music, Kilowatt’s head is glowing and there is a giant green slug with sharp pointy teeth in the tunnel. The slug wants to swallow Killowatt or the chimps. Prior to being swallowed, Kilowatt says she has been scared her whole life, that she has now learned to control her fears and tells the slug: “You swallow me and I will only grow stronger”. She then stages a diversion so the slug follows her and swallows her, allowing the two space chimps to escape.

At 1 hour 13 minutes Luna, the female space chimp, flies off the landing module and lands heavily on the ground. She lies prone for some time but soon recovers.

Apart from the above instances there are various scenes where aliens pick up the chimps or other aliens and put them in the frozen pond or threaten to do so. There are various crashes or accidents, flying monsters of one kind or another.

(c) Language – there was no use of coarse language

(d) Sex – there was a single very mild sexual reference relating to a volcano

(e) Drug Use – there was no drug references

(f) Nudity – there was no nudity

7. Reasons for the decision

The film is an animated feature with a story line of walking, talking chimpanzees, which can control a spacecraft and undergo many adventures. The creatures they encounter are talking, singing and dancing aliens ranging from slug-like creatures, upright squashy creatures, the big-headed but tiny Kilowatt, and plant vines with heads like snakes. The animation and unrealistic setting is unlikely to have any children believing that the story is real. Most of the creatures are not threatening. The chimps deal with the snake-like plants by putting the head of one into the mouth of the other. Lord Zartog, who is an upright, squashy creature, is comical, not very bright and a bit menacing at the same time. The chimps seem to deal with him effectively even when they are pinned, they still seem in control.

However, the scene where Kilowatt is swallowed by the slug is prolonged (about 60 seconds) and she is a named creature with whom the audience sympathises. Yet she is shown as being in control of her destiny and choosing to be swallowed, telling the slug she will only become stronger. She re-appears later in the film, none the worse for having been implicitly excreted from the slug, which is said to be “good at swallowing, not at chewing”.

The tone of the film is light and for most of the 81 minutes of the film is humorous and charming in tone. For one minute there is a scary scene, which is preceded by the character taking responsibility for her fears and actions. She is later seen unharmed.

Overall the Review Board concluded that the characters were not realistic, the setting was outer space and even very young children would be able to distinguish between this fantasy setting and reality. Further, the animation, light tone, humour and general charm of the film was such as to greatly mitigate any very mild sense of menace at one or two scary points in the film.

8. Summary

It was the unanimous determination of the Review Board that the film could be accommodated in the G classification and that the consumer advice of ‘some scenes may scare young children’ would be sufficient to warn parents of the scary element that may concern some sensitive, younger children.