

Before the Film and Publication Review Board.

In the matter between:

Global Video

And

The Film and Publication Board.

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In re: Appeal by Global Video against the XX classification assigned to the film - *Island of Death*

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**Award**

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Professor Karthy Govender  
Chairperson

**Introduction and Description.**

- 1) This is a low budget, badly acted, poor quality film that was made in the mid nineteen-seventies. Some of the classifiers and members of the Review Board expressed the view that this is amongst the most disturbing films that they have had to review. This is a story about two people, whom we later learn are brother and sister, engaging in a series of sadistic thrills and the film is nothing more than a catalogue of horrors that have been slapped together. It appears to be a glorification of violent, antisocial and prejudicial behaviour without any redeeming social message or relevance of any sort. The unrelenting violent scenes, which in some instances amount to torture, appear to serve no other purpose other than to appeal to the basest instincts of those who have a penchant for watching violence being repeated in various forms again and again.

### **An Assessment of the Submissions.**

- 2) Mr. Mohammed, who made written submission, in support of the film argued that other films like *Ken Park* and *Baise Moi* were violent and were not classified X X. He expressed the view that such a classification in respect of *Island of Death* was paternalistic and an insult to the intelligence of the mature viewing public. He requested an '18' classification with an advisory of SVNLP.
  
- 3) This film does not even pretend to deal with complex social issues as did both *Ken Park* and *Baise Moi*. To compare this film to them is thus cynical and opportunistic. The Film and Publication Act 65 of 1996 (the Act) requires classifiers to classify according to the Act and the guidelines promulgated in terms of the Act. The classifiers are drawn from various segments of the South African society and make decisions in the best interests of this society. Their classification decisions are neither paternalistic nor insulting, but a simple discharge of statutory obligations reposed in them.
  
- 4) The classification committee was unanimously of the view that this film deserved an XX classification. They identified the various scenes of violence, prejudice, drug taking, and scenes in which people were treated with indignity and expressed the opinion that the film fell under schedule 6 and schedule 10 which justified an XX classification. An XX classification is the most serious restriction that can be imposed on any film and given the significant intrusion that such a classification makes into the freedom of expression, such a classification cannot be arrived at lightly.

### **Analysis and Decision.**

- 5) As indicated earlier, this film is characterized by anti-social violence. Christopher, believing that he is god's angel and that god punishes

perversion, in gruesome fashion, kills a number of people. The violent scenes that were deeply disturbing were:

- The crucifixion scene in which nails are hammered into the hands of the French man seduced by Celia.
- The pouring of paint into the mouth of the man until blood begins to ooze out.
- The gun in the mouth of Paul, the young gay man, and the subsequent shot which splatters parts of his brain on the wall.
- The beheading of the older woman.
- The hanging of the black detective from the helicopter.
- The lesbian women being incinerated to death with the blow-torch and the focus on her face as it visibly burns.
- The sickle being plunged into the back of the rape victim through the door.
- The slaughter of the goat.
- Scenes of incest

6) In addition there is a scene of bestiality in the film when Christopher has sex with a goat and then slaughters it. There are a number of sex scenes. None of the sex scenes are explicit and all of them are simulated.

7) There are two extremely distressing rape scenes. In one instance, Celia is raped by two hippies and in the other, Christopher attempts to rape the Greek girl who offers them accommodation. Both scenes are graphic and display the anguish of the victim and the determination of the perpetrators. There is a third rape scene when Christopher is raped by the Neanderthal man.

8) In addition, there is a scene where Christopher urinates on the older woman, who appears to enjoy it and who is then brutally assaulted and

decapitated. The lesbian woman is observed injecting heroine and the scene is detailed and prolonged.

9) There is strong prejudice against gays as Paul and Jonathan are murdered in gruesome fashion for no other reasons other than that they were a gay couple. Similarly the lesbian woman is killed because she is lesbian. Racist comments are also made about the black detective.

10) This film clearly does not fall with schedule 7 which permits an X18 classification in respect of films which contain scenes of explicit sexual conduct. The issue before us is whether this film falls under schedule 6 of the Act, which provides:

*A film shall be classified as XX if, judged within context, it contains a scene or scenes, simulated or real, of any of the following-*

- 1.
2. *bestiality, incest or rape,*
3. *explicit sexual conduct which violates or shows disrespect for the right to human dignity of any person or which degrades a person or which constitutes incitement to cause harm;*
4. .
5. *the explicit infliction of extreme violence or the explicit effects of extreme violence which constitutes incitement to cause harm.*

11) There are scenes of bestiality, incest and rape as described above. The scenes of violence, while not characterized by gore, are graphic and sometimes can be classified as torture. The scenes of rape, incest and

bestiality are not part of a carefully constructed plot to grapple with social issues, but rather a series of disjointed slapping together of social taboos. The scenes are included for no other reason other than to allow the viewers to watch bestiality and rape. The brutalizing of the older woman and the rape scenes of the women can be classified as extreme violence and may, given the lack of any redeeming social message, constitute incitement to cause harm. The harm in this context is not just physical harm. Films of this nature have the effect of conveying the message that acts of rape and brutalization are not entirely unacceptable in society. This could have a serious effect on the sense of well being of women and other vulnerable groups in this society.

- 12) Given the lack of any redeeming message or context, the extremely disturbing nature of the film and the scenes detailed above, we are of the opinion that the film falls most appropriately within XX category and thus affirm the decision of the classification committee in this regard.

## **Conclusion.**

**The film "Island of Death" is classified XX.**

Concurred by:

Ms Penny Marek  
Ms Rene Smith  
Mr. Andrew Verster  
Adv. Ronald Lessick.

**Dated: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2005**