

Censor's betrayal as he passes 'sick' rape movie

by KATE SHERRY, Daily Mail

Film censors provoked outrage last night after ruling that a film featuring a nine-minute rape scene may be shown uncut in British cinemas.

The French-made movie, Irreversible, prompted a walkout when it was screened at this year's Cannes Film Festival-and was branded 'sick and gratuitous' by critics.

Other scenes include a bisexual pimp being battered to death with a fire extinguisher in a sadomasochism sex club.

But the British Board of Film Classification has granted the film a general release 18 certificate-and allowed it to be shown uncut.

The decision comes despite guidelines issued by the board itself which state clearly that extra care should be taken when scenes eroticise, or appear to endorse, sexual violence.

The film was seen as the first real test for the new president of the BBFC, former civil servant Sir Quentin Thomas, who took up his job in August.

Immediately after his appointment Sir Quentin, who is married with three grown-up children, voiced concerns over the 'dangerous' impact of sexual violence in films and called on the Government to tighten laws on cinema and video regulation.

He said 'erotic violence' could do a great deal of harm to viewers and some could become hardened to violent images if they saw too many of them.

His arrival was hailed by many as the end of the board's soft stance on violence and explicit sex and the increasing liberalisation of attitudes and rules by his predecessor, Andreas Whittam Smith.

John Beyer, of the pressure group Mediawatch, last night attacked the censors for failing to act to restrain levels of gratuitous sex and violence in films.

He said: 'I had high hopes for Sir Quentin Thomas so it is very disappointing to find he is no different from those he replaced.'

'I think it is a very wrong move to turn rape into a form of entertainment.'

'This is especially hard to stomach when you read the board's own rules on sex and films and the robust approach to censorship they plan to adopt - evidently a case of saying one thing and doing another.'

'The problem is that these censors on the board are funded ultimately by the commercial film industry and for that reason it is time the Government intervened to stop this appalling material from slipping through the net.'

'There is a growing problem with sex offenders and violence - surely this is not going to help that and I would encourage local authorities to invoke their powers to stop this being shown at their local cinemas.'

Officials at the BBFC defended their decision not to cut the obscene material from the film, in which the rape victim is played by Italian actress Monica Bellucci, saying they had first 'taken advice from a clinical psychiatrist'.

A spokesman said: 'The board recognised that elements in the film may be shocking and, for many viewers, unpleasant.'

'These, however, are not by themselves reasons for censoring them for adults.'

'It contains no explicit sexual images and is not designed to titillate.'

'The board was satisfied, therefore, that no issue of harm arose in the context of a cinema release for adult viewing only.'

'The board has therefore decided not to intervene with the film for cinema release.'

The BBFC said it might review its rating if the film was submitted for home viewing as this might lead to it being 'viewed repeatedly'.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-143918/Censors-betrayal-passes-sick-rape-movie.html>