

REPORT TO: LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - 1 FEBRUARY 2023

REPORT BY: LICENSING MANAGER

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**Licensing Act 2003 – Section 20 - Mandatory Condition - Exhibition of Films
"The Mire" - Boathouse No. 6 Portsmouth Historic Dockyard**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to exercise its statutory powers as Licensing Authority to impose an age classification using the BBFC film classification categories in respect of a film exhibition to be shown at Boathouse No. 6, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, College Road, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. The date for this screening is scheduled for 3 February 2023.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Section 20 of the Licensing Act 2003 provides that where a premises licence or club premises certificate authorises the exhibition of a film, it must include a condition requiring the admission of children to films to be restricted in accordance with recommendations given either by a body designated under section 4 of the Video Recordings Act 1984 specified in the licence (currently only the British Board of Film Classification - "BBFC") or by the Licensing Authority itself.

A request has been made to the licensing authority by the director of the film, Mr Adam Nelson, for an age appropriate film classification to be applied by them in advance of the proposed screening at Boathouse No. 6 on Friday 3 February 2023.

Mr Nelson has advised that the production could possibly be the biggest independent film Portsmouth has seen and has also stated that it is a Portsmouth film, made by Portsmouth people, with support from Portsmouth institutions. Given its local connections to the City, they would like it to be screened in Portsmouth.

3. SUMMARY OF FILM SYNOPSIS

Year: 2022 Genre: Psychological Thriller Duration: 1 hour, 35 minutes

Set over the course of one night, THE MIRE is a contained psychological thriller that focuses on Joseph Layton, the charismatic leader of a religious cult known as The Canon, which, after 16 years, and with a now considerably large community of followers, is moving towards its end, an "ascension" that will see Joseph lead his congregation in a mass suicide, in order to take their place among the stars.

However, The Canon is a con, a deception that Joseph has used to slowly steal large quantities of money from his followers, and tonight he plans to leave, with no intention of sticking around to lead them towards what they think is their destiny.

What Joseph doesn't count on, is that two of his most devout followers, Hannah Headley and Marshall Jones, show up at his church, before he has a chance to leave, and, believing that he is testing their faith on the eve of their ascension, plan to attempt to realign him with the beliefs of The Canon, so that he may lead them to their own deaths.

Unable to tell the truth, and with only a handful of hours until daybreak, Joseph now finds himself trapped within his own web of lies, and a game of cat and mouse begins to play out, with Joseph, Hannah and Marshall all attempting to maintain control, as a series of personal revelations begin to spiral the situation into threatening areas of both honesty and deception.

4. BBFC CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

BBFC is an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit, co-regulatory body. Its role is to classify:

- Films, trailers and advertisements on behalf of local authorities who licence cinemas;
- Video works under the Video Recordings Act 1984;
- Video works which are distributed over the internet under a voluntary, self-regulatory service;
- Commercial and internet content distributed via mobile networks under a voluntary, self-regulatory service.

The Classification Guidelines produced by the BBFC follow extensive public consultation, as well as other research, expert advice and its accumulated experience over many years. The Guidelines pay particular attention to changes in public taste, attitudes and concerns as well as changes in the law. They also take into account new evidence from research or expert sources. The guidelines are reviewed on a regular basis.

The guiding principles applied by the BBFC are:

- To protect children and vulnerable adults from potentially harmful or otherwise unsuitable media content;
- To empower consumers, particularly parents and those with responsibility for children, to make informed viewing decisions.

Attached as Appendix A is a copy of the most recent BBFC Guidelines but in summary the following general advice applies to the classification categories in terms of age restrictions:

U Universal - Suitable for all

A U film should be suitable for audiences aged four years and over, although it is impossible to predict what might upset any particular child. U films should be set within a positive framework and should offer reassuring counterbalances to any violence, threat or horror.

See Page 18 of the Guidelines for more comprehensive guidance.

PG Parental Guidance - General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children

A PG film should not unsettle a child aged around eight or older, Unaccompanied children of any age may watch, but parents are advised to consider whether the content may upset younger, or more sensitive, children.

See Page 20 of the Guidelines for more comprehensive guidance.

12A/12 - Suitable for 12 years and over

Films classified 12A and video works classified 12 contain material that is not generally suitable for children aged under 12. No one younger than 12 may see a 12A film in a cinema unless accompanied by an adult. Adults planning to take a child under 12 to view a 12A film should consider whether the film is suitable for that child.

See Page 22 of the Guidelines for more comprehensive guidance.

15 - Suitable only for 15 years and over

No one younger than 15 may see a 15 film in a cinema. No one younger than 15 may rent and or buy a 15 rated video work.

See Page 24 of the Guidelines for more comprehensive guidance.

18 - Suitable only for adults

No one younger than 18 may see an 18 film in a cinema. No one younger than 18 may rent or buy an 18 rated video work.

See Page 26 of the Guidelines for more comprehensive guidance.

R18 - To be shown only specially licensed cinemas, or supplied only in licensed sex shops and to adults only.

The R18 category is a special and legally-restricted classification primarily for explicit works of consenting sex or strong fetish material involving adults. Films may only be shown to adults in specially licensed cinemas, and video works may be supplied to adults only in licensed sex shops. R18 video works may not be supplied by mail order.

See Page 28 of the Guidelines for more comprehensive guidance.

5. APPEAL PROVISIONS

There are no appeal provisions in the Act in respect of any classification decision made by the Licensing Authority.

6. APPENDICES

A. BBFC Guidelines.

THE COMMITTEE IS REQUESTED TO DETERMINE THE MATTER

**Licensing Manager
For Head of Service**