

BBFC

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

16th February 1996

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From: James Ferman *Director*

Councillor E Goodman
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Members Room
Town Hall
Reigate
Surrey RH2 0SH

Dear Councillor Goodman,

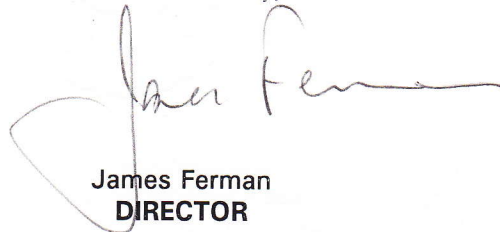
You wrote to me last month about the film *SHOWGIRLS*, which was just opening in Britain. No doubt you have read the reviews of the film, which were even worse than those in America where it failed disastrously at the box office. In Britain, the public has again rejected it, and it has, after only three and a half weeks, virtually disappeared from cinema screens in Britain.

It is not the Board's role to reject films on grounds of taste, though we have received a number of complaints that this film should have been so rejected. We have replied that, in the adult category, our role is limited to the prevention of harm and the enforcement of the law. In case you have not seen this film (none of our other complainants had), our quarrel was not with the sex, since there is very little of it and all well within '18'. Nor was it with the nudity, which is no longer a contentious issue in Britain. What we took exception to was a gang rape scene, which was both exploitative and excessively violent. For narrative purposes, all that was needed was to make it clear that the nicest character in the film had been horribly and violently betrayed by the star she idolised and fancied. This could have been achieved by seeing her thrown out of his room with blood on her thighs, and by the doctor's statement that she had internal injuries. It was not necessary to see this vicious act in all its prurient detail. A better film might have justified such a scene by its responsible treatment, but *SHOWGIRLS* was shot as a turn-on for most of its length and was hyped as such. We took the view that this treatment could not justify such an explicitly vicious rape. Thirteen seconds were cut, not thirty-five as you suggest. Every second of those cuts consisted of brutal sexual assault.

As I'm sure you know, this Board has taken a very strict line on exploitative rape scenes for more than twenty years. In this, we appear to have the support of the British public.

Although we are well aware of your views, you are of course welcome to write to us again if you wish to know about any other of our decisions. It is important that we should be aware of the full range of public views on such controversial matters.

Yours sincerely,



James Ferman
DIRECTOR

President
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Harewood, KBE
Director
James Ferman

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