

WRITTEN REASON FOR DECISION SECTION 12

TITLE OF PUBLICATION: Eight Mile

OFLC REF:201828

HEADNOTE

Type of Publication: Film 35mm

Title of Publication: Eight Mile

Other known title: 8 Mile

OFLC Publication Reference No: 201828

Decision: Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years.

Display Conditions: Nil.

Descriptive Note: Contains violence, offensive language, drug use and sex scenes.

The film *Eight Mile* is classified as objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years. This classification is based on the extent and degree of violent and sexual material and depictions of drug use.

The film is an American production, starring well-known rapper Eminem. It is a semi-autobiographical drama: Eminem plays a young white man, Jimmy Smith Jnr, living on the wrong side of Detroit's black/white divide, Eight Mile Road. Jimmy is known to his friends as "Rabbit". He has a "trailer trash" mother, a dead end job, and ambitions. He wants to succeed in the world of black rap and is supported by a group of friends, mainly young African-American men. There is opposition from other young neighbourhood blacks who object to a white boy succeeding in a black domain. Key scenes take place at a rap club called the "Shelter", where rappers compete one-on-one against each other in "battles". The opening scenes show the young rapper nervous, vomiting and drying up on stage and climactic scenes later in the film show him victorious in another such contest. A strong theme throughout is the overcoming of adversity through belief in yourself, but there is also considerable footage

showing other themes such as the importance of friends. The setting adds to the authenticity of the scenario: most of the film is shot in run-down streets and ancient cars. Music consists of rap tracks featuring Eminem and other rappers. There is frequent use of offensive language throughout.

Matters of sex, violence and crime have been considered under s3(1) of the FVPC Act. The publication does not fall under the criteria of s3(2).

The film contains infrequent but fairly explicit sexual references in dialogue and lyrics – terms such as "pussy" and "dick" are used - and three visual representations of sexual matters. Two of these are brief glimpses of sex, indicated by movements simulating intercourse. They have been filmed with the intent of suggesting, rather than showing sex. For instance, one of these very brief scenes shows a woman's bare back striped with shadow. The main sexual scene is an intense coupling between the principal character and a young woman. Sex is portrayed by urgent movements, groping hands, heavy breathing and expressions of sexual excitement, with the remainder left to the viewer's imagination. Violence portrayed consists of several incidents of physical assault and one depiction of gun use. This material is discussed under s3(3)(a)(i), below. The film depicts cannabis use by the young characters at several points, and one scene shows the main character's mother affected by drink or drugs. The issue is discussed under s3(3)(d), below.

The film contains several instances of physical assault, depicted in fast-action style with few blows seen to land and little focus on consequential damage. One of the concerns with this material is the way that violence is portrayed as the normal reaction of a quick-tempered young man to provocation such as the taunting of his step-father. A further concern is the "gang" connection, with one incident, in particular, set up as a deliberate beating. However, the storyline does give the incident a context of professional envy that makes it clear that this is not a confrontation between rival gangs, nor is it a question of race in any usual sense of the term. There is one nasty incident of partner violence where Jimmy's stepfather verbally abuses his mother and shoves her to the floor. Jimmy intervenes and he and his stepfather exchange blows. His mother tries to stop the fight but it does not end until Jimmy's young sister begins to cry in fright. The scene is grimly realistic but appropriate to the context. Only one incident involves gun use. It results in one of the group of young men wounding himself. The incident is treated with some humour but the message that guns are a danger to users is clear.

The film's depictions of cannabis use raise the question of whether the publication promotes or encourages criminal acts. The use of cannabis is not focused on or given particular prominence. However, the extent of cannabis use shown tends to normalise it as part of the young, urban lifestyle. Although these depictions do not directly involve the character played by Eminem, his status as a role model for his teenage audience is another factor considered in this regard. The film tends to lend encouragement to the use of cannabis, at least to a limited degree.

The dominant effect of the film is its focus on the angry young man character played by Eminem. It is coloured by the drab grey of run-down streets but frequently lightened by the warmth of friendship and the love of music. Scenes of "impromptu" rap are particular highlights. The film will have wide appeal to followers of rap music and fans of Eminem in particular. However, the strength of the film's depictions of violence and sex, and the

portrayal of cannabis use as an accepted part of the lifestyle of the young characters, renders the material clearly unsuitable for children and young teenagers. There is a likelihood of injury to the public good if the publication is available to this young audience, who do not have the maturity required to give context to these elements. The extensive use of offensive language further points to the film's suitability for older teenagers and adults.

Written reason for decision is not required for section 12 submissions. It is the policy of the Classification Office to provide written reasons for section 12 submissions.