

Film Censorship in Denmark

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History of film censorship in Denmark

Film censorship was until 1913 performed by the local police authority. In 1913 censorship became a national activity, which in 1938 became fully established through the founding of the National Board of Film Censorship. Until 1960 films would either be permitted for all, prohibited for children, completely prohibited or edited, typically for reasons of violent or erotic content. In 1960 the law was revised and introduced age limits for children at 12 and 16 years of age. In 1969 adult film censorship was abolished in parallel with the abolishment of censorship for image pornography; literary pornography had been legalized in 1967. With the revision of the Film Law in 1997, the National Board of Film Censorship was replaced by the Council for Children and Young People, which rates films by ages 7, 11 and 15 years. The new classification system places the responsibility of protection in the hands of the families, since all films are now allowed from the age of 7, if accompanied by an adult.

Film censorship in Denmark has virtually not prohibited any films for religious reasons. Most films have been censored because of explicit violence or eroticism. In general the censors have been much more focused on violence and moral depravity relating to crime, while scenes of a sexual nature have been judged with less tenacity. Though some films were edited in the late 1940s to not provoke the Soviet Union, there has never been legal basis for political censorship and examples are rare.

Some significant historical events

In 1907, Minister of Justice P.A. Alberti revoked the cinema license of Ole Olsen and Nordisk Film, and prohibited the film *Løvejagten (The Lion Hunt)*. The film caused a great public stir being accused of animal mistreatment. At the center of the film is a scene in which two lions, retired from the Hamburg zoo, are shot by wild game hunters on a small Danish island. The film had its foreign release in 1907 and became the company's greatest success, selling 259 copies worldwide. In 1908, the accusations were withdrawn and the film could be shown in Denmark.

During the German occupation, 1940-45, the National Board of Film Censorship was overseen and monitored by the German occupation authorities, but more or less continued its operation as usual.

Ongoing and balanced self-censorship ensured only minor conflicts with the German authorities during this period.

With the abolishment of adult censorship in 1969, Danish feature film production grew from an annual output of approximately 20 films, to approximately 30 films per year throughout the 1970s. The increased production predominantly consisted of erotic soft- and hardcore films, for which there was an increased demand. Especially the “Bed Side” and “Zodiac” series were successful and well known examples.

In the 1997 revision, censorship shifted away from being an old "prohibition institution" into a new modern institution with a broader composition and more expansive commitments to protect children through user empowerment.

The Media Council:

http://www.dfi.dk/Boern_og_unge/Medieraadet/The-Media-Council-for-Children-and-Young-People-in-Denmark.aspx

The Film Act of 1997 can be found here:

<http://kum.dk/servicemenu/english/services/legislation/film/the-film-act/>

The DFI/Film Database contains rating information on the individual films:

<http://www.dfi.dk/Service/English/Films-and-industry/Factsheet.aspx>

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