Case Report

1. Case Number :	**0243-23**
2. Advertiser :	**Universal Pictures**
3. Product :	**Entertainment**
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	**Billboard**
5. Date of Decision:	**8-Nov-2023**
6. Decision:	**Dismissed**

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.3 Violence

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This billboard advertisement features an image of a young girl in a dirty white dress in a church and the words, "Body and the Blood The Exorcist Believer".



THE COMPLAINT
Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

Inappropriate and scary for kids and even some adults.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

The below response is in relation to the complaints received regarding Universal Pictures advertising for The Exorcist: Believer specifically in regard to the outdoor billboard advertisements depicting the artwork which could cause alarm and distress to Children.

Universal Pictures International Australasia adhere to the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics.

Section 2.3 of the Code states "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised."

The Exorcist: Believer, is a horror film which contains artwork which could be scary in nature. It would therefore be reasonable to justify that our advertising materials have been produced within the context of the product being advertised.

Universal Pictures strive to advertise films of this content in a manner that remains appropriate for all consumers.

To ensure due diligence, prior to activity going live we seek approval on our creative from key outdoor media partners and carefully plan out our targeting with the agency to deliver an outdoor plan designed to reach Adults 18-44yrs who are fans of the horror genre as well as in areas which are not close proximity of children's zones, such as, Schools etc.
Please also note that all advertising materials for this film have displayed the (Check the Classification) logo on the artwork & updated once the film was classified.

We apologise for any distress caused and would like to reassure all parties involved that we have adhered to all required standards and the industry code of conduct in relation to the advertising materials and placements for this film.
Please let us know if you require any further substantiation.

THE DECISION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement was frightening.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

Section 2.3: Advertising shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

The Panel noted that the Practice Note for this section of the Code states:

> *"In considering whether the violence or menace depicted in an advertisement is justifiable, the Community Panel may have regard to the audience of the advertisement. Graphic depictions of violence or a strong suggestion of menace have been found to present violence in an unacceptable manner especially when visible to a broad audience which includes children. For example, advertising for violent or horror movies, tv shows or video games should take care not to include images that give the impression that a character has just committed violence against someone (for example, a weapon with dripping blood), was the victim of violence (for example, freshly severed limbs) or is about to commit violence against someone (for example, gun aimed directly at a person or the viewer) where there is a broad audience which includes children. More leeway is permitted where the depiction is stylised rather than realistic."*

Does the advertisement contain violence?

The Panel noted that the advertisement was dark and set in a church. The Panel noted that the child in the advertisement appeared dirty and dishevelled (with bare feet), however considered that she did not appear injured or otherwise harmed.

The Panel considered that although there was a textual reference to blood in the advertisement, there was no actual blood or gore and no actual violence depicted.

Section 2.3 Conclusion

The Panel determined that the advertisement did not present or portray violence and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code, the Panel dismissed the complaint.