



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 152/98 |
| 2. Advertiser | The Premium Movie Partnership |
| 3. Product | Entertainment |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Violence Other – section 2.2
Other - Causes alarm and distress to children
Other - Miscellaneous |
| 6. Date of determination | Tuesday, 13 October 1998 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement (black and white) shows a man trapped inside an enclosed space or box. The man breathes and pants heavily.. He ignites a cigarette lighter (to provide light) and is shown frantically clawing at and knocking the apparently wooden sides of the box/space. He locates a remote control device which he uses and a television set (inside the box) is switched on. As the picture on the television screen emerges, he appears to relax somewhat. The camera then ‘zooms’ upward/above ground and the advertisement shows a length of white tubing/cabling shown protruding from a rectangular mound/box in the ground. The advertisement concludes with the words (voiceover) ‘With over 5000 movies a year, Showtime, its not the box, it’s the box office.’ There is also a graphic of a television screen with the same wording superimposed thereon.

THE COMPLAINT

Comments the complainants made about the advertisement included:

‘The horizontal camera angle and setting are apparently intended to create the effect of someone buried underground. ...Now it may be said that this is fantasy...I find myself utterly repelled by this concept, as I feel it is exploitative in playing on one of people’s deepest fears. I am especially concerned for the sensitivities of children or anyone who has recently buried a loved one, being confronted with this disturbing image.’

‘I found (the advertisement) extremely distressing as I am claustrophobic and suffer from severe depression resulting from child abuse such as being locked in cupboards for lengths of time.’

‘...this advert was simply not appropriate for screening at a time when children are possibly watching. It was akin to a scene from a horror film, which, in my estimation, would attract an MA rating.’

‘The ad is insidious in that it does not reveal the context until the very end, so you watch 20 or 25 seconds before you understand what it is you’ve really be watching. It is an extremely violent and disturbing image. I don’t believe it is necessary to remove such imagery from movies because as an audience member, I have some understanding of the type of movie I’m watching and a context in which to place various scenes. It is a totally different matter, however, to include such graphic, disturbing violence in the middle of an innocuous American TV drama. The violence was totally unexpected and it felt like an assault.’

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (‘the Board’) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (‘the Code’).

Members of the Board were of the view that this advertisement did not go so far as to breach the Code and dismissed the complaint. However, Board members felt that the advertisement was not suitable for viewing by young audiences and the matter should accordingly be referred to the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) for its consideration.