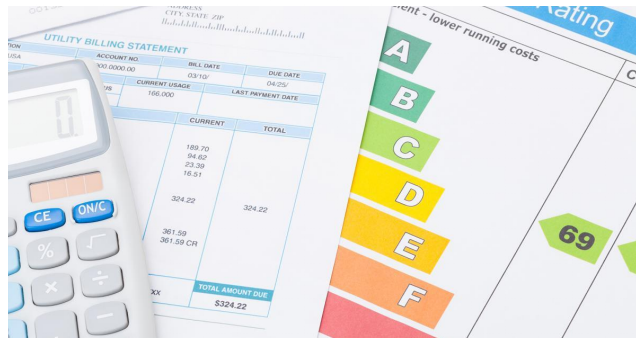




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It's not just the internet that's full of violent porn - so are cinemas

By **CHRISTOPHER TOOKEY**
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The newspapers are full of the revelation that Vincent Tabak, the Dutchman who strangled Joanna Yeates to death, was addicted to violent pornography showing the choking and strangulation of young women.

On the same day as Mr Tabak was found guilty of Jo Yeates's murder, I was exposed to the latest work by another Dutchman.

Writer-director Tom Six has followed up his controversial 2009 horror film *The Human Centipede*, which features a mad scientist joining three people together surgically.

For his sequel, *The Human Centipede II (Full Sequence)*, Six has stitched together a film that is ten times more extreme. *filthv* and *psvchoopathic* than



© AFP/Getty Images

Dutch engineer Vincent Tabak was found guilty of murdering his neighbour Jo Yeates

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the original.

I don't think many critics are going to bother denying it is ugly, boring, nihilistic, repetitive and profoundly repellent.

Six does a creditable job of insulting his fans by making his sadistic anti-hero Martin (played by actor Laurence R. Harvey) a huge fan of the first Human Centipede film.

An obese, inarticulate, mentally-ill man who lives with his mother, Martin gets his kicks by abducting motorists from a multi-storey car park and taking them to a disused warehouse, where he attempts to join 12 of them together into a 'human centipede' with one digestive system.

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To this end, he slices off pieces of anatomy, indulges in sadistic unskilled dentistry, rapes, and forces them to defecate for his — and presumably the audience's — amusement.

That such obviously depraved, exploitative vileness has not been banned, but has instead been granted an 18 certificate, is yet more proof that the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) has lost its collective marbles.

The producers of this exercise in extended sadism are advertising it as 'a film so sick the BBFC didn't want you to see it'.

It is true the BBFC did initially deny the film an 18 certificate, on the grounds that no amount of cuts could overcome the central problem — that the plot revolves around a character whose sexual arousal relies on the torture and degradation of others.



Depraved: The first Human Centipede film, which starred Ashley Williams and Ashlynn Yennie, above

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However, in perhaps the most lily-livered act of its inglorious history, the board reversed that decision after an appeal by the film's distributors.

While 32 cuts were made, excising two minutes and 37 seconds of footage, these do little to reduce the horrors in the film.

And the board's decision will mean fans of the film will now be able to see it more than once — both in the cinema and on the uncensored DVDs and downloads available over the internet, where its evil will no doubt be appreciated in salacious detail.

One of the BBFC's vice-presidents, Gerard Lemos, disagreed with the granting of a certificate but abstained, rather than dare vote against the rest of the board.

Incidentally, this timid gesture of principle was commended on the website of the Guardian, that bastion of unthinking liberalism.

The BBFC's climbdown means *The Human Centipede II* opens in cinemas next Friday, despite the producers' boasts it is 'the sickest film of all time' — a claim that would probably be true were it not for the wide availability of *A Serbian Film*, a picture granted an 18 certificate by the BBFC only last year.

Relating the story of a porn star who agrees to star in an art film, but finds it is actually a snuff movie (in which the people taking part are filmed being murdered), *A Serbian Film* wallows in extreme sexual torture to an arguably greater degree than *The Human Centipede II*.

It includes repulsive outrages, such as the rape and murder of a baby and a young child, decapitation and necrophilia.



At the helm: Tom Six, Dutch director of both *Human Centipede* Films, the second of which has been granted a certificate after cuts

No doubt, Tom Six will already be thinking of how to incorporate these and other horrors into the forthcoming *Human Centipede III*, which he has already promised will make Part II 'look like a Disney film'.

We are now reaping the rewards of poor decisions on film

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She shunned the formal dress code

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classifications made earlier. From the release of the controversial 1996 film *Crash* onwards, the BBFC has repeatedly allowed 18 certificates for films that wallow in sexual degradation, rape and torture.

Crash was a landmark in cinematic pornography, because it encouraged those who have a sadistic sexual bent (or discovered they had one as a result of seeing the movie) to believe they are not alone, that attractive people feel the same way, and that there is no need to worry about harm to others as a result of sado-masochistic acts.

The film preached violent sexual self-gratification in a way never advocated before in a mainstream feature film.

At first, the influence of this tended to be in abstruse foreign-language art-house films, such as *Seul Contre Tous* (1998), *Baise-Moi* (2000), *Irreversible* (2002) and *Anatomy Of Hell* (2004).

More recently, however, a new genre of mainstream, English-language films has sprung up, often called 'torture porn', in which Hollywood director Eli Roth and others have wallowed in the erotic degradation of both sexes.

Many of these have had *Hostel* or *Saw* in the title, there are dozens of them and, as a film critic, I have had the misfortune to see them all — none of which would have got past the censors before 1996.

Of course, the BBFC's powers are of limited effectiveness. The two recent films it has refused to certify — on the grounds they consist entirely of sexual humiliation — are available on the internet. I'm not going to give them the oxygen of publicity by naming them.

Other equally sadistic and degrading films that have not even been offered for classification — mostly made in Japan — are also available. If I were involved in policing, I would take a keen interest who imports these and similar films for their entertainment.

Anyone who thinks violent pornography is harmless and cathartic is deluded. The rise of the internet means any one country's attempt to maintain some minimal standards of decency can be of only limited effectiveness.

Differences of culture means there will always be some country in which selling this kind of pornography will be not only permitted, but encouraged. There is more money than ever to be made out of exploiting people's weaknesses and perversions.

However, there can be no doubt the BBFC's refusal to grant an

Do we all have to live with the social and criminal consequences of these films? Yes.

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She's one of the night's nominees

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18 certificate to the few films it has stood up to must have made those productions less profitable and decreased their availability.

In the meantime, the flood of vicious pornography continues unabated.

Several questions need to be answered more honestly than they have been.

Should the opportunists responsible for films like this be ashamed of themselves? Yes.

Do films like this help to brutalise some of those who see them? Of course.

Does the British Board of Film Classification care? Not enough.

Do we all have to live with the social and criminal consequences of these films? Yes.

And will there be more innocent victims like Joanna Yeates?

It seems to me that the answer is dismayingly obvious.

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