

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR DECISION

Under the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 (FVPC Act)

HEADNOTE

Title of publication:	Get Out
Other known title(s):	Not stated
OFLC ref:	1700099.000
Medium:	Film
Classification:	Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years.
Descriptive note:	Violence, offensive language and horror.
Display conditions:	None

Get Out is a horror/comedy feature from the United States with a running time of just under 104 minutes.

In *Get Out*, photographer Chris, and his girlfriend, Rose Armitage, are off to meet her parents, Dean, a neurosurgeon, and Missy, a psychiatrist. Rosi's brother, Jeremy, will also be there. Chris is concerned and a little wary because Rose hasn't told her parents that he is black. The Armitages are effusive in their welcome of the young couple. Chris meets Georgina and Walter, the housekeeper and groundsman, who are also black. There is something disturbing about them. That night, Chris can't sleep and goes out to smoke. Missy is also up and as they talk, she hypnotises him. When he wakes the next morning, he is sure that that the encounter was just a nightmare. Guests arrive later for the Armitages' annual 'shindig' and various older white couples take an unusual, ingratiating interest in Chris. Unbeknown to him, Rose's father auctions him off for a lot of money. Chris meets a black guest, Logan, and unsettled by Logan's bizarre speech and demeanour, he rings his friend Rod and tells him about how uncomfortable he feels. A box in Rose's closet contains photographs of her with various black people, including Walter and Georgina, and this adds to his uncertainty and unease. He tells Rose that he wants to leave. As they go downstairs, they are blocked by Jeremy, Dean, and Missy. Rose then reveals that she is an accomplice. Chris attempts to escape but is incapacitated by Missy's hypnosis. He wakes in the house's basement, fastened to a leather chair. A television informs him that the Armitages have perfected a method of pseudo-immortality in which Dean, a neurosurgeon, transplants the consciousness of his older friends and family into younger black men and women, whose minds have been conditioned for the procedure by Missy. Chris will be used as a host for Jim, the blind man who won the auction, who wants to regain his sight. Chris makes his way from this danger using plenty of desperate violence and then last minute help from Rod who arrives in the nick of time.

The genre is horror with some moments of comedy, and the film is stylish and accomplished. The main concerns for classification are the extent, degree and manner in which the publication deals with matters of horror, violence and cruelty, and a limited amount of sex, under s3(1) of the

Act. Depictions of serious physical harm and associated cruelty are discussed below under s3(3)(a)(i). Matters of crime and issues to do with crime are outlined under s3(3)(d). The manner in which the publication treats racist assumptions and behaviours comes under s3(3)(e). Under s3A, the impact of the use of highly offensive language is considered and a suicide is considered under s3B. There is no content that requires discussion under s3(2).

There are a limited number of sexual references usually combined with highly offensive language. These come mostly by way of Rod, a large man who speaks in Black Vernacular and is certain that Chris is in a dangerous situation to do with sex slavery - "Licking your balls", "Fucking the brains out..." and "Sucking some dick". He also warns Chris: "Nigga, get the fuck out of there", "Leave motherfucker", and describes his employer (the TSA) as "TS motherfucking A". Rod's role is to be the comedic foil. He is a warm character, concerned for his friend. Further highly offensive language is heard on a regular basis through the film. 'Motherfucker' heard as is 'fuck' and variations. For example, "She can't fix my motherfucking life", "What the fuck?" and "You fuck". The language is generally heard in times of anger and stress. Under s3A it is normalised by the extent of its use in a manner that is likely to encourage younger viewers to emulate it.

The film's dénouement turns it into a survival thriller; unpredictable scenes keep the viewer on edge, result in death and there are limited tones of cruelty. Chris becomes a master of gore as he moves through the evil characters taking them out in various ways. He belts a man over the head with a small hard ball that is at hand; stabs another using the antlers of the trophy deer head pulled from a wall; uses a knife that goes through a woman's hand; stabs a man in the knee with the spindle of a door handle and then repeatedly kicks or stomps him in the head (the victim is obscured by the door). Throughout all this, Chris also has to engage with physical attacks and attempts at strangling him. Later he tries to strangle an adversary himself but cannot do it. The sequence is fast moving, tense and exciting. Blood is seen but in places that marry with the violence inflicted. Chris has a fair amount over his t-shirt. Most of the imagery is glancing and crafted to follow the action rather than wallow around the victims or the injuries. These final scenes are strong but they are ameliorated by camera angle and editing. There is one instance of gruesome horror seen earlier, when a surgeon uses an electric saw to take the top off a man's skull and then throws the bloodied piece into the waste basket. This gives it a humorous tone. In terms of the narrative, the violence is triumphant; an endgame which is satisfying for the viewer.

Considering crime, the film opens with a standard horror trope – a scary suburb at night, but this one has a black man being frightened in a white middle class neighbourhood. He is abducted and an iron mask is involved. There are also murders and imagery of a man being hypnotised for nefarious purposes and detained against his will. A cult is explored, one which snatches people and performs illegal medical procedures on them. The film uses these activities as a driving part of the fiction and as such, they are not promoted or encouraged as per s3(3)(d).

There is a brief image of suicide during the dénouement. Walter (the groundsman) has a gun, shoots a woman in the stomach, and then turns the gun on himself. The barrel is up under his chin. The camera pulls away as the shot is heard. This character is releasing himself from his own hell. While this is likely to be shocking and disturbing to younger viewers it is unlikely to encourage imitation.

The film is written and directed by a respected comedian and deals with race and racial tension in a refreshing manner. The themes touch on mixed relationships, eugenics, the slave trade, racism in the suburbs and police racism. There are white liberals who pride themselves on not being racist but who show their racist attitudes with loaded comments and questions, for example, how

it is “in to be black” and when a woman looks at Rose and pointedly asks. “Is it true?” alluding to black men’s so-called large genitalia. Initially, the racism doesn’t feel overt but it becomes increasingly obvious as the narrative progresses. The film clearly does not represent African Americans as inherently inferior (s3(3)(e) - discriminatory attitudes are used to illuminate and educate.

Get Out begins with a journey to introduce a boyfriend to parents and evolves into a nightmare saturated in dark unthinkable secrets. It is a film with high artistic, literary and cinematic merit. The erudite social commentary adds social merit particularly because it is the heart of the film.

The film’s unrestricted availability is likely to be injurious to the public good because of its depictions of horror and violence. The sometimes bloody and gory deaths are likely to shock and disturb younger viewers. The horror elements of unease, menace, fear and terror are strong, as is the dénouement. The themes of racism require some maturity to interpret. Older teenagers and adults are likely to have the knowledge and experience to understand the racial satire within a context of horror. The use of highly offensive language and the strong sexual references add to the need for a restriction. The film is therefore 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 a reasonable limitation on the right to freedom of expression in the preventing injury to the public good.

Note:

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