

Movie Rating System III



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF THEATRE OWNERS

Talking Points

- The Classification and Rating Administration (CARA) rating system is the industry's **voluntary self-regulatory ratings program** designed to assist parents in making choices for their children. The system deliberately avoids getting into the relative merits or qualities of any film. It is narrowly designed as a heads-up concerning certain kinds of content that American parents typically would consider in making their own decisions. CARA's website: <http://www.filmratings.com>.
- The CARA ratings system, however, is not a "monopoly" (except in the narrow sense that the MPAA has a registered intellectual property right in the particular ratings, G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17). Indeed there are numerous services and resources that provide helpful information to parents on movie content, and we welcome that **diversity**.
- It is true that—with only five rating categories available to CARA—the ratings will seem odd at times, with seemingly different movies sometimes receiving the same rating, and seemingly similar movies sometimes receiving different ratings. The rating itself, however, is not the only source of information provided by the CARA rating system. CARA typically assigns **rating reasons**, which provide more specific information as to why the film received the rating it did. The following movies, for example, illustrate the use of both ratings and rating reasons:
 - *Constantine* (2004) Rated R for violence and demonic images.
 - *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) Rated R for violence including an intense brutal rape scene, sexuality, language and drug use.
 - *Lust, Caution* (2007) Rated NC-17 for some explicit sexuality.
 - *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003) Rated PG-13 for intense epic battle sequences and frightening images.
 - *Half Baked* (1997) Rated R for pervasive drug content, language, nudity and sexual material.
 - *Enchanted* (2007) Rated PG for some scary images and mild innuendo.
- As is evident, the rating reasons often provide more information than television ratings. Rating reasons, however, are assigned **only when the reason was instrumental** in causing the specific rating that the film received. Thus, for example, there may be some violence in a movie—but if the level of violence is not one of the reasons that the movie received a PG-13 or R rating, then violence would not be listed as a rating reason.
- While the rating reasons do provide additional helpful information, the system is not, and is not designed to be, a perfect or comprehensive compendium of all potential content concerns. For that reason, movie theaters encourage parents to make use of the multiple resources available for assessing the content and appropriateness of movies. NATO intends the CARA rating system to operate **alongside of—not instead of—multiple resources** for parents making appropriate movie-viewing decisions for their children. Examples of resources on movie content include the following:
 - http://www.common sense media.org/reviews/our_ratings.php;
 - <http://www.kids-in-mind.com/help/methodology.htm>;
 - <http://www.screenit.com>;
 - <http://www.filmadvisoryboard.org>;
 - <http://blog.beliefnet.com/moviemom>;
 - <http://www.dove.org>;
 - http://www.mpa.org/FilmRat_Ratings.asp;
 - <http://www.usccb.org/movies/familyvideo/videoall.shtml>