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## **OPINION REVIEW**

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In the Matter of  
***Manhunt***  
published by  
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### **INTRODUCTION**

On January 16, 2004, the Film Classification Office procured a copy of the interactive motion picture *Manhunt* for the purposes of conducting an opinion review. This action was taken to determine if *Manhunt* qualifies as an “adult motion picture” as defined in the *Motion Picture Act*. Specifically, the legislation provides the following definition:

*1(b) a motion picture that has not been reviewed under section 5 that depicts*

*(viii) scenes of brutality or torture to animals, depicted in a realistic and explicit manner*

The above definition provides guidance as to the level of violence that constitutes an “adult motion picture.” Explicit violence and horror can be found in “non-adult” motion pictures rated “18A.” However, if the violence is brutal or involves torture and is presented in a realistic as well as explicit manner, the motion picture is deemed to be “adult” and must be subject to classification requirements under the *Act*.

### **ANALYSIS**

*Manhunt* is an interactive motion picture for the Playstation 2 video game console in which the player assumes the role of a killer named James Earl Cash. The player is required to navigate Cash through a darkened city world populated by thugs, gang members, and other miscreants. In order to advance the narrative, Cash must follow the instructions of a “snuff” filmmaker who encourages Cash to commit various murders. For each victim that Cash is able to stealthily execute, a “snuff” clip is shown to highlight the fatality.

Most of the action in *Manhunt* is presented from an overhead point-of-view taken from behind the Cash character. As a result, the many hand-to-hand combat scenes in *Manhunt* are comparable in

visual intensity to those found in typical action and horror films at the “non-adult” level. As well, the realism in these scenes is weakened by the excessive level of assault the characters are able to withstand. For example, characters can sustain numerous baseball bat strikes to the head without injury or impairment.

The “snuff” clips used in depicting successful killings are presented with greater intensity than the routine game action. These clips are typically shown in medium shot with cutting between camera angles. The image quality of the “snuff” clips is degraded through stylized distortion and tracking noise one might expect to find on old surveillance footage. Methods of execution depicted in the clips may include suffocation, bludgeoning, stabbing, and others.

While there is little disputing the brutal and violent nature of these scenes, the determinative question is whether or not this brutality is depicted in a realistic *and* explicit manner. In this respect, the “adult”-classified *Soldier of Fortune* (2000) provides a vivid example of realistic depictions of bloodshed, brutality, and torture. In that game, over 26 hit locations exist on character bodies to allow for pinpoint accuracy in terms of dismemberment and tissue damage. Human bodies can be fully brutalized, mutilated, and eviscerated.

*Manhunt* lacks the sustained realism found in *Soldier of Fortune* and other violent “adult” titles. Even its most graphic content tends to be portrayed in brief. The execution scenes are usually no longer than two or three seconds and are often obscured by shadows and rapid camera switching. In many scenes, the weapon and point of impact are not clearly visible to the viewer and cannot be characterized as explicit. The available animation portraying body and tissue damage is limited and does not approach the level of sophistication required for a realistic depiction. *Manhunt*, unlike other violent “adult” titles, does not allow the player to engage in prolonged mutilation and dismemberment of bodily remains.

Overall, *Manhunt* depicts violent material consistent with “non-adult” films. A reasonable comparison can be drawn between the content of *Manhunt* and that of several recent “18A” theatrical releases including *Cabin Fever*, *Freddy vs. Jason*, and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

## CONCLUSION

*Manhunt* is not an “adult motion picture” as defined in the *Motion Picture Act*. Be advised that while this title falls outside of the jurisdiction of the Film Classification Office, this does not imply, suggest, or advocate that *Manhunt* is suitable for children. Parents and retailers are strongly advised to follow the “Mature (17+)” rating applied by the Electronic Software Rating Board which considers *Manhunt* suitable for persons 17 years of age or older.



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Film Classification Office

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Vancouver, British Columbia