

New rating won't solve problems

So it appears that the intrepid "Indiana Jones" has built a Temple of Doom for the old Hollywood rating code. "Jones" was the last straw, or should I say the last steaming monkey's brain or the last fresh heart, that broke the back of support for the single PG rating.

Ellen Goodman

Here was a movie that not even the director thought little kids should see. Stephen Spielberg's PG kids should see. Steven Spielberg's PG (Producer Guidance) cautioned parents to cover the eyes of any child 10 years old or under during the most violent 20 minutes.

Now even the movie moguls feel compelled to react to the incipient parental rebellion. The industry heavies are now being polled and it appears that they will be adding a new label to the quartet on the marquee of America. PG-13 is a warning that the movie may be too "intense" for children under 13.

You will forgive me if I managed to stifle my wild enthusiasm for this movie. Frankly, I am underwhelmed by Hollywood's attempt to modify its code instead of its behavior.

Rather than limiting sex and violence, they are increasing the ratings. Rather than improving the product, they are improving the warnings. It's rather like getting a broken car back from the auto mechanic with a new improved description of its problems.

Ratings were originally introduced in 1968 to stave off censorship. Films were given a G, PG, R, or X according to four criteria: the movie's theme,

language, violence, nudity and sex. The distinctions got into the theological realm: How many swear words can dance on the head of a PG? Do two frontal nuditities, six murders and a partridge in a pear tree rate an R?

In the past 16 years the four ratings have been effectively reduced to two. G has gone the way of all flesh... and all violence. Back in 1973, 87 of the 584 films rated were given a G. Last year, only 11 of 342 films got the same letter. Even Disney movies throw in enough swear words to be awarded the coveted PG.

X has also disappeared from its spot on marquees. Once such emotional rough stuff as "A Clockwork Orange" or "Midnight Cowboy" were X-rated. Today the X is virtually reserved for the "Debbie Does Dallas" porno flicks. Only two movies got an X from the Motion Picture Association of America last year.

That leaves Rs and PGs. Today, two-thirds of all the movies submitted in the voluntary rating system get what they want — an R. They are thereby restricted to those who are over 17, have a friend over 17, or can pass for 17.

The PG category is the most controversial rating of all, not to mention the most spurious. Richard Heffner, a head of the industry rating group, has said sanctimoniously, "The movie's PG rating doesn't mean 'Pretty Good'... It means parental guidance is needed."

But he doesn't say how you provide parental guidance without screening every movie and standing guard at the box office. A child doesn't need a permission slip to see a PG, just the price of admission. The industry doesn't give the Ps much help in forming their Gs. How do we know if PG means "Probably Gratuitous" violence of "Presumably Gratuitous" sex?

Continued on Page 6

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Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the summer 1984 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this summer's editor in chief, Lauri Hopple.

Other staff members will write editorials throughout the summer. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

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