

WRITTEN REASONS FOR DECISION SECTION 12

TITLE OF PUBLICATION: 50 Cent: The New Breed

OFLC REF:300508

HEADNOTE

Type of Publication: DVD

Title of Publication: 50 Cent: The New Breed

Other known title: 50 Cent – The New Breed DVD

**OFLC Publication
Reference No:** 300508

Decision: Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years.

Display Conditions: Nil.

Descriptive Note: Contains violence, sexual references and offensive language.

The publication entitled *50 Cent: The New Breed* is 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 due to the manner in which the publication deals with matters of violence and crime.

The publication is a DVD (digital versatile disc) containing several notices and a variety of other components. These components are accessed through a menu screen that lists options including *Documentary*, *Detroit Show*, *Music Videos* and *Bonus Material*. Accessing any of these options brings the viewer to another menu screen in which the options include watching the entire component or accessing different chapter that make up the component. For example the *Music Videos* menu screen lists the videos entitled *Heat*, *Wanksta*, *In Da Club* and *Heat (Street Version)*, and also *Behind The Scenes Of Wanksta* and *Behind The Scenes Of In Da Club*.

All of the components focus on the personality, music, career and lifestyle of the popular Jamaican-American rapper 50 Cent. 50 Cent is signed to Eminem's record label Shady Records, and collaborates musically with both Eminem and Dr Dre. Most of the components

are linked conceptually and visually to 50 Cent's larger than life 'gangsta' persona. The *Documentary* presents interviews with 50 Cent and his colleagues about 50 Cent's rise to success. The *Detroit Show* component combines onstage and offstage footage of 50 Cent. The *Bonus Material* consists of more performances, the trailer for the film *Eight Mile* and the credits for the DVD. Most of the personalities featured on the DVD frequently use offensive language, both in the context of their lyrics and during interviews. The soundtrack to the publication is largely comprised of 50 Cent's music, which is tuneful, catchy hip hop. The same songs are repeated throughout the publication.

The bonus compact disc that is packaged with the DVD contains three songs, with a combined running time of nine minutes 35 seconds. The songs have similar themes to the music on the DVD soundtrack including fidelity to friends, realness and respect.

The publication deals with sexual matters in the form of several verbal and visual references. 50 Cent and his friends, who band together under the name G Unit, are sometimes depicted talking about their sexual exploits in a boastful but humorous fashion. Some aspects of these conversations and images are derogatory to women, although often tongue in cheek. At one point, for example, 50 Cent tells a story about taking a woman back to his hotel room. He refers to the woman as a "pretty bitch" and says that the smartest thing that ever came out of her mouth was his "dick". 50 Cent also presents the story as proving that he is now a successful rapper because a woman who looks like this wants to have sex with him. During the component *Behind The Scenes Of In Da Club* 50 Cent asks the camera "Where the hos at?" which is then followed by a montage of close up shots of women's buttocks and breasts.

The publication contains numerous images and references to violence and crime. The menus that play automatically after loading the DVD display images of rifle targets being hit by bullets, along with the sound of gunfire. During 50 Cent's live performances the songs are often preceded by the sounds of a gun being cocked and then bullets being fired. One of the songs on the soundtrack, *Heat*, uses the noise of gunfire as part of the backing track. One of the most common images on the DVD is of handguns, and of people thrusting guns at the camera. The only components on the publication that contain depictions of violence and its effects are the music videos *Heat* and *Heat (Street Version)*. Both of these videos include strong images of violence and lay a heavy emphasis on guns and gunplay and as such are addressed below in terms of s3(3)(a)(i).

The manner in which the publication deals with violent crime, including the way that this theme links to 50 Cent's lyrics and persona, is discussed below under s3(3)(d).

The publication has been examined in relation to s3(2)(f), which is discussed below in conjunction with s3(3)(d).

The terms of s3(3)(a)(i) of the FVPC Act deal with the extent and degree to which, and the manner in which, the publication describes, depicts or otherwise deals with the infliction of serious physical harm. The publication presents images of the infliction of serious physical harm in the music videos *Heat* and *Heat (Street Version)*. Both of the videos relate to the same song. *Heat* is centred around two young men playing a computer game in which the objective is to eliminate influential African-American rappers. The video cuts between images which place the viewer in the computer game in the style of a "first person shooter", and shots of the two players. 50 Cent also appears in front of a computer graphic of city streets. The game is frequently seen from the driver's seat of a car, with the player's game

persona represented by a pair of brown arms. The game persona performs such acts as giving money to a police officer in exchange for a gun, throwing a grenade into a car and using a flame-thrower on another vehicle.

The video climaxes with a sequence in which the persona enters a club where the human 50 Cent is performing onstage, and fires at him but causes him no harm. This is intercut with shots of one of the players holding a real gun and looking at it while it becomes a computer graphic of a gun in his hand. The camera focuses on the man's shocked face as he appears to realise the potential implications of using a gun. This video presents as a satirical commentary on both computer games and the world of hardcore rap, while still boosting 50 Cent's image as a tough and violent "gangsta". 50 Cent is pictured delivering such lyrics as "I've seen gangstas get religious when they start bleedin / Sayin 'Lord Jesus help me cause they ass leakin'".

The music video entitled *Heat (Street Version)* has the effect of emphasising the violence of the lyrics of the song. The video is filmed in a deliberately rough and ready handi-cam style and presents a scenario in which 50 Cent and his gang grab a man off the street. The gang physically abuse their prisoner, put him in the boot of a car, drive to another location and dump his body on the ground. Apart from the song *Heat*, ominous music also plays during some sequences, which has the effect of increasing the tension that the viewer feels.

In one prolonged sequence 50 Cent raps in the foreground while the gang beat the prisoner, who lies on the ground. The gang kicks and punches the man repeatedly, with one person using a piece of wood. Their movements are exaggerated and the impact of the blows is not visible because of where 50 Cent is positioned.

After the beating sequence there are several shots from the point of view of the victim, as 50 Cent uses masking tape to gag and bind him. 50 Cent is then depicted in close up holding a gun to the side of the victim's head. After the victim is transported in the car boot there is another shot from the victim's point of view as the trunk is opened and one of the men punches him.

After the victim's body is carried out of the car and placed on the ground it is not clear what happens to him. The rest of the video consists of 50 Cent performing to the camera while the rest of the gang stand behind him and wave their guns around, frequently pointing them at the camera.

The violent and ominous scenario is lent impact by the jerky camerawork, which makes the depiction appear more realistic, and the shots from the victim's point of view. The lyrics include phrases including "I'll ride by and blow your brains out" which are particularly disturbing in the context of a depiction of a kidnapping and beating.

The terms of s3(3)(d) of the FVPC Act deal with the extent and degree to which, and the manner in which, the publication promotes or supports criminal acts. The terms of s3(2)(f) refer to whether the publication promotes or supports, or tends to promote or support the infliction of extreme violence. The publication as a whole is not considered to promote or encourage criminal acts, however there are matters of concern in the publication's depictions of guns and violent acts. The violent and disturbing aspects of the music video *Heat (Street Version)* (as discussed above in terms of s3(3)(a)(iii), in combination with other themes of the publication, could present as being promotional of violence and a violent lifestyle.

50 Cent's carefully cultivated 'gangsta' image is clear throughout the DVD, in such aspects as the gun range menu graphics. 50 Cent talks in the interview footage about how he likes guns, and how he got shot nine times, but it hurt more when his record company ignored him. 50 Cent and his colleague Tony Yayo frequently refer to how they used to be crack dealers but now they can make money from their music. These elements, and the video *Heat (Street Version)* glamourise a violent lifestyle as it is embodied by 50 Cent.

The publication's depiction of 50 Cent is balanced to a certain extent by the fact that there is a lot of other general footage in which he comes across as a serious, focussed artist. He is also depicted looking after his young son, and he credits his son with giving him the inspiration to get out of the ghetto.

The dominant effect of the publication as a whole is of a slickly packaged collection of material about the popular American rapper 50 Cent. The material showcases his abilities as a live performer, his rise to fame through the underground tapes scene and his music videos. The publication is likely to be made available to an audience of adults and older teenagers and will appeal to fans of 50 Cent, Eminem and Dr Dre. However the publication is likely to have wider appeal due to the fact that 50 Cent has recently been at number one in the New Zealand singles chart. The publication's unrestricted availability is likely to be injurious to the public good. This is due to its presentation of violent crime. The treatment of violent crime is concerning because of its glamorising effect, due to the fact that violence is presented as being a large element of the rapper 50 Cent's image. Maturity of judgement is required for the viewer and therefore the publication is restricted to an audience of older teenagers and adults. Therefore the publication is classified as objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 16 years.

Written reasons are not legally required for section 12 submissions, but it is the policy of the Classification Office to provide them.