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NEW ZEALAND CENSORS BAN MANIAC BEYOND FILM FESTIVALS AND UNIVERSITIES

The New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) have released a report outlining the reasons for their recent decision to ban the upcoming Monster Pictures release of director Franck Khalfoun's MANIAC, starring Elijah Wood, from exhibition beyond "bona fide film festival screenings" and those associated with tertiary film studies.

It would appear that the NZ OFLC take particular offense at the use of a device within the film that shows the murders from the killers POV, suggesting that this device invites the viewers "vicarious participation" in the murders and could cause an "erosion of empathy" to those exposed to the film.

Monster Pictures reject this claim outright. Horror is a cinematic genre enjoyed by millions of healthy, well-adjusted people around the world – these people demand films that challenge and disturb them, it is the most basic tenet of the genre. To suggest, that exposure to a film such as MANIAC lessens the impact of real violence to these viewers or could somehow lead to incidence of real violence is preposterous and as far as we are concerned, is supported by no genuine evidence.

The NZ OFLC also suggest in their report that MANIAC would be "highly disturbing and shocking to children and teenagers, and indeed most adults.", Monster Pictures agree, so why then does the OFLC turn its back on its own rating system? which, in our opinion, very effectively rates motion pictures and also provides very adequate consumer advice to would-be-buyers. Our experience suggests that banning the film does little to deter viewers in fact it works to the contrary, adding to the notoriety of the film and encouraging illegal access to the film to people of all ages, without the benefit of rating or consumer advice.

The decision to restrict legal exhibition of MANIAC to film festivals and institutions of tertiary film studies would seem to infer that rank-and-file members of the public would be ill-equipped to deal with the horror depicted within the film. Again we reject this notion and believe it to be little more than a pompous slur on the intelligence of the adult cinema going population of New Zealand.

MANIAC was selected to premiere at the 2012 Cannes Film festival and as this would suggest, is a horror film of the highest quality. Elijah Wood is as disturbing, menacing and utterly compelling as any horror villain that has come before him in cinema history. Monster Pictures urge all adult New Zealanders who enjoy horror to attend the New Zealand International Film Festival screenings of the film, we also urge you to speak out in defense of your ratings system and against this very public slur by the NZ OFLC.

Monster Pictures will explore all avenues to have the decision revoked in New Zealand and will be releasing the film on DVD in Australia in October 2013.

RELEASE ENDS

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