



Adult Learning Within Reach

## Member Lecture – 30 November 2023

Hollywood and The Hays Code – 1934-1968

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Questions answered post-lecture

### **Q1 if the Arbuckle scandal was proven baseless, does the same apply to rest of the stuff in the book Hollywood Babylon?**

Many of the more lurid claims in Kenneth Anger's 'Hollywood Babylon', which was published as early as 1959, have been debunked since then. So, the whole book must be taken with a very large pinch of salt.

### **Q2 Were British censors concerned about different issues from the US censors?**

Censorship in Britain was always more about 'classification', since we had a system that rated some films as A for Adult as early as 1912 (eventually we added H for Horror in the 1930s and X for eXplicit in the 1950s). The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) were always more vague about what would or wouldn't mean a film went in one category or another. Although there was a list of potential infractions published in 1916, it is definitely less concerned with the possibility of copycat violence than the US code. Interestingly, when US films were screened in the UK, the UK censor took quite a liberal view of violence in them, as it was assumed that UK audiences would understand that these are 'American films', and they do things differently there!

### **Q3 Is blasphemy an exception still?**

The BBFC ruled just a couple of years ago that 'damn', 'hell', etc. are all fine in a U rated film. Stateside, as far as I can tell, blasphemous language in that sense is no longer on the MPAA's radar. Only what they describe as 'harsher sexually derived words' would push a film into the PG-13 category.

Useful links and resources for further reading

**Censored Hollywood** – Frank Miller (1994) – US perspective

**What The Censor Saw** – John Trevelyan (1973) – UK perspective

Forthcoming WEA courses by Christopher Budd

**Special effects at the movies (Q00012251)** – starting 15 Jan, 5 sessions (online)

**Music in film (Q00012261)** – starting 16 Jan, 10 sessions, Royston (in person)

**125 years of British film (Q00012761)** – starting 29 Feb, 5 sessions, Kings Lynn (in person)