



MOTION PICTURE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, INC.

May 16, 2008

VIA E-mail (jgolin@jbcc.harvard.edu)

Josh Golin
Associate Director
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Re: *Advertising of PG-13 Motion Pictures*

Dear Mr. Golin:

The Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. (MPAA) recently has received letters and e-mails generated from what clearly appears to be an organized campaign by your group concerning the advertising of PG-13 rated motion pictures, including "Iron Man", "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull", "The Incredible Hulk" and "The Dark Knight".

Several days ago, the head of the MPAA's Advertising Administration, Marilyn Gordon, reached out to you to discuss your concerns. During that conversation, Ms. Gordon spent a great deal of time discussing the specifics of how the MPAA rating system operates, the meaning of our PG-13 rating, and the processes undertaken by our Advertising Administration to review advertising for rated motion pictures. We are disappointed that your organization has seemingly elected to overlook much of the information she provided you and instead has undertaken an orchestrated campaign that you must know mischaracterizes the MPAA rating system in several important ways.

The voluntary MPAA rating system was established almost 40 years ago to provide parents advance information about movies, so that they can make informed decisions on what they will allow their children to see. These ratings include both the classification given to each movie – G, PG, PG-13, R and NC-17 – and rating reasons - which give parents information about the type of material in the movie that resulted in the rating for that movie. The central tenet of the rating system is parental choice, since - simply put - individual parents are better situated than anyone else to make these determinations on behalf of their children. Parents consistently tell us that they want to make those decisions for their children. And they consistently cite the MPAA rating system as extremely useful – and, in fact, a unique tool -- in making that determination.

These ratings and rating reasons are widely disseminated to the public through motion picture advertising, our website, our Red Carpet Rating e-mail service, parents groups, reviews and other sources. The rating rules also are easily accessible to parents everywhere via both www.mpa.org and www.filmratings.com.

Our PG-13 rating, which is featured in your letter-writing campaign, provides a warning to parents to investigate the movie before allowing their young children to view it, as some material in the motion picture may not be suitable for their children under the age of 13. Unlike the R and NC-17 ratings, however, the PG-13 rating is not a restrictive rating and admission is permitted by - and often may be appropriate for - children younger than 13. Attendance by children of various ages at a PG-13 motion picture is a decision best made by their parents, taking into consideration the age, maturity and individual sensitivity of each child and the type of content in each movie. As a result, advertising PG-13 motion pictures to children under 13 is not "inconsistent with their rating," as your organization erroneously suggests.

Advertising for PG-13 films is reviewed for appropriateness for the audience expected to view the individual ad, taking into account both the content of the ad and the content of the motion picture. The ads for certain PG-13 motion pictures may be deemed appropriate for all audiences, while ads for other PG-13 films may be approved only for carefully targeted audiences, for example those viewing specific shows at specific times or in specific publications. These judgments reflect many years of experience by our Advertising Administration and we believe that those judgments are sound, since we receive very few complaints from the public about that advertising.

Based on this background, which we have already explained to you directly, it is unfortunate that your letter-writing campaign deliberately misuses and mischaracterizes the MPAA rating system – and the PG-13 rating in particular – as well as the process for approval of advertising for rated motion pictures in order to fit your organization's agenda. Suggesting that motion pictures rated PG-13 are *per se* inappropriate for children under 13 mischaracterizes the CARA ratings and the decisions of the MPAA Advertising Administration and does a great disservice to a system that has effectively served parents for 40 years.

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Our shared goal ought to be providing parents with as much information as possible regarding the content of films, thereby ensuring that parents can make informed viewing decisions for their children. We therefore ask that your organization discontinue its current misleading public activity supposedly based on the PG-13 rating.

Sincerely,



Gregory P. Goeckner

Cc: Keith Fentonmiller, FTC
Kendrick MacDowell, NATO