

Censorship is tricky business. Does covering the Statue Of David's wiggly jiggle bits help uphold decency and good taste or is it better to let them dangle about in the name of progress, artistic intent and mild giggling?

The censorship of information, human rights, free speech - all of this would make a deep and fascinating video. And this is NOT that video.

This is about cartoons.

So foregoing the question of good or bad thing, and just accepting it as a thing, media knows there are certain rules they have to abide by to get a certain certificate rating or be allowed to be broadcasted. And in turn, they have found ways to actually use the censorship way more creatively, than if they were uncensored.

So please - "won't somebody think of the children!"

## **MORALITY**

The problem with censorship based on morals is that morals can change. This casting couch gag in the outtakes of Toy Story 2 was cut following the whole Weinstein thing which feels kinda unnecessary but I ain't dying on this hill. But it does illustrate how unpredictably attitudes can change.

So how can you arbitrate morality? Many have tried.

4Kids TV introduced American audiences to many anime shows for the first time, but as the block was aimed for 7 to 11 year olds, it had to severely censor a lot of material to comply with that rating. Guns were changed to pointing fingers, cigarettes became lollipops, rice balls became jelly doughnuts and I don't know why.

For Yu-Gi-Oh, 4Kids actually created a piece of story lore, which doesn't exist in the Japanese media. Basically if a character was meant to die, they'd often instead be sent to "The Shadow Realm", a place of darkness and eternal torment. So hell. 4Kids basically invented hell to protect children. But this means depending where in the world you watched it, you got totally different stories.

And this isn't the only time 4Kids meddled with the actual storyline for censorship reasons. This young girl's self-sacrifice death scene in Sonic X was changed to where the girl just leaves. It's ok kids, she didn't die, she's gone on holiday. TO THE SHADOW REALM!

In the 1930s, Hollywood movies studios had to follow the Motion Picture Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, basically a list of rules movies had to follow to stay moral and this stuck around for over 30 years.

There's some wacky rules in here like no Belly Dancing, no jokes about religion, and no interracial couples, Jesus Christ. [blasphemy rule] Ah shit... [profanity rule] Ah fuck!

It wasn't until Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho in 1960 did we finally get the very first shot of a flushing toilet. A big day for cinema.

In 1938 James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart starred in Angels With Dirty Faces, a gangster movie which makes you wonder, how does a genre of moral ambiguity fair in an overly moral set of rules? For example under these rules, gangsters weren't even allowed tommyguns.

And if there's one thing gangsters are known for, is following the rules. Other rules involve limiting the use of firearms and murder. Ah, the two genders. The normal workaround was a

shot of the gun firing followed by a shot of someone shot. In *Angels With Dirty Faces*, they got around this by having Rocky in the reflection of a mirror. I just like this ingenuity, taking a restriction and making something stylish out of it.

Likewise, because Rocky has shot someone, the Hays Code demands he has to be brought to justice or shown to be in the wrong, but the audience will side with the character because these were the villains and it's narratively justified so both morals are at conflict. So towards the end, they have Rocky shoot policemen during his escape. The killing is actually really unnecessary, there was no need for Rocky to do that, but it means narratively it's more justified bringing the character to justice. A bit like a certain pointless bombing scene in a certain Marvel certain show...

## **SEX AND NUDITY**

The Hays Code had a knock on effect with sitcoms and family shows as showing a couple sharing a bed was too hot for TV so separate beds became something of a classic sitcom trope.

The bastard child of the Hays Code known as Comics Code Authority was born in 1954 which governed what could and couldn't be said in comics. It's been abandoned since the 2000s but this all came about thanks to the book "Seduction Of The Innocent" which actually suggests that Batman and Robin are a gay couple because they share a bed together. And if sharing a bed makes you gay, then I am gay for insomnia. Also head lice.

The current US rating system, the MPAA, is heavily puritan when it comes to sex. So PG sex was often just alluded to, such as a visual metaphor. Or innuendo.

This carries over to nudity as well with how things allude to nakedness without showing nakedness to keep the age rating down. Such as framing, off screen, in silhouette, covered by conveniently long hair, the Ken doll, the pixel box or the classic censor bar. Deriving from redacted text and identity protection, it can also be used to more alluring effect than had the subject been fully exposed.

This physical censoring extends to being obscured by props, like *Austin Powers* or *Neon Genesis*.

In fact, *The Simpsons Movie* is an interesting example, because after an elaborate sequence of censoring Barts bits, it then censors everything EXCEPT Barts bits. How did they get away with that?

While it is generally censored on TV, it was permitted in cinemas. Even Disney+ which had previously covered up Daryl Hannah's bare bottom with a crudely edited giant hairy arse in a way that would make 4Kids proud. The British Board of Film Classification said that natural nudity with no sexual content is acceptable.

So a bare naked Bart got by, just barely.