

WRITTEN REASONS FOR DECISION SECTION 12

HEADNOTE

Type of Publication:	Film 35mm
Title of Publication:	Eastern Promises
Other known title:	Not Stated
OFLC Publication Reference No:	702544
Decision:	Objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 18 years.
Display Conditions:	Nil
Descriptive Note:	Contains graphic violence and sex scenes.

The 35mm film *Eastern Promises* is classified as objectionable except if the availability of the publication is restricted to persons who have attained the age of 18 years primarily due to its treatment of sex, violence, horror and cruelty.

Eastern Promises is 101 min 21 sec in length and comprises the feature only. The feature is directed by David Cronenberg who has a cult following and is known for his gory and realistic depictions of violence. The plot deals with contract killing, revenge killing, internal mob power struggles and family dysfunction. Set in London, it deals with the Russian Mafia and their connection to Tatiana, a 14 year old girl who dies in childbirth. Anna, the hospital midwife, sets about trying to find some family with whom to leave the baby. Her search leads her to Semyon, the Russian mob boss, Kirill, his drunkard closet homosexual son, and their driver, Nikolai, who is actually working undercover. The narrative concludes with Nikolai replacing Semyon as the mob boss and Anna raising the child as her own. Orchestral and Russian-style music are used to create and enhance atmosphere. Some dialogue is presented in Russian with English subtitles. Tatiana periodically reads passages from her diary as a voice-over.

Under s3(1) of the FVPC Act the publication deals with matters of sex, horror, crime, cruelty and violence. The film deals with matters of sex, specifically in the context of prostitution. There is only one sex scene. Kirill and Nikolai visit a brothel where the women sit around and appear drugged. It may be that the women have been forced into prostitution as Tatiana was (described in her diary). Kirill orders Nikolai to have sex with one of the women saying he wants to "watch you fuck one of these bitches to prove you're no queer". Nikolai is shown in a long shot having intercourse positioned behind the silent naked woman who is bent over the bed. There are shots of her breasts but no focus on her pubic area. The scene is far from sexually arousing. Neither of the participants appears to enjoy the experience and it is presented as solely for the benefit of Kirill who perhaps enjoys watching Nikolai and who is trying to assert his dominance over him.

The scene in which an attempt is made on Nikolai's life has a homoerotic aspect as the naked man is involved in a very physical fight to the death with two men. Full nudity is depicted.

The manner in which the narrative deals with the mob's attitude that women and homosexuals are inherently inferior is discussed under s3(3)(e). The rape of a 14 year old girl has been considered under s3(2)(a), s3(2)(b) and s3(3)(a)(ii). Crime is inherent to the plot which deals with the criminal underworld and is discussed under s3(3)(d). Several of the images are horrific and relate to the infliction of serious physical harm and cruelty, discussed under s3(3)(a)(i).

Under s3(2)(a) and s3(2)(b) the publication deals with a 14 year old girl who is raped and becomes pregnant. Tatiana's rape is referred to in voice-over only and it is not described in sexual terms. She says that she was thrown downstairs and hit until she bled. Kirill tried to rape her but could not, so and kept beating her instead. Semyon raped Tatiana, yelling at Kirill, "If you don't break a horse it will never be tamed". She also says that the men regularly injected her with heroin and that they gave her pills to try and terminate the pregnancy. The context and manner in which the publication deals with the violent rape of a young person does not promote or support or tend to promote or support the exploitation of young persons for sexual purposes or the use of violence to compel anyone to submit to sexual conduct, or the use of violence in association with sexual conduct.

The film has a pervasively violent tone. It contains several scenes that graphically depict the infliction of serious physical harm in association with elements of cruelty and horror. The strongest scene depicts two men in black trying to kill the naked Nikolai in a public bathhouse. The two men use small, crescent-shaped knives to slash at Nikolai's body as he wrestles them. The lengthy fight sequence is fast-paced and intense. It involves bloody slashing, punching, kicking, choking, bone-breaking and wrestling, all of which are accompanied by blood, visceral sound effects and a great deal of animalistic groaning. Nikolai stabs one man in the chest with his own knife. Nikolai then sits upon the other man and positions the knife behind the man's head, pushing down on the man's head as he screams and writhes, heightening the homoeroticism of the scene. Nikolai's first victim, who lies in a pool of blood, grabs him by the throat, pulls the knife from his own chest and tries to stab Nikolai. Breaking the man's arm, Nikolai manages to wrest the knife from him and stabs the man in the eye, killing him. Nikolai's wounds are realistically depicted both during and after the sequence.

The film opens with a man having his throat hacked open with a cut-throat razor as he sits in a barbershop. The youth who kills him is developmentally challenged and is clearly unwilling to commit the murder. His overbearing uncle bullies him into complying and assists him as the youth makes a clumsy sawing motion across the man's neck. The injuries inflicted on him are realistically presented and bloody. The man is shown frozen in a deep freezer, his head twisted on an unnatural angle and blood covering his clothing. Kirill makes tasteless jokes that simultaneously trivialise the man's death and increase the audience's disgust at his attitude. Nikolai attempts to thaw the victim with a hairdryer and calmly advises the other men that they might want to leave the room as he is about to remove the man's teeth and fingertips. Nikolai proceeds to cut the man's fingertips off. The camera focuses on a realistically depicted removal and then crunching noises indicate a second finger has been removed. The body is later shown after it is taken from the river. A brief close-up shows the stumps where his fingertips used to be, and his toothless mouth.

A youth is shown walking through a cemetery after a soccer match and urinates on a grave. Two large men in black walk up to him, grab his throat briefly and quickly move on. The youth has a shocked expression and begins to gurgle unpleasantly as his hands reach for his scarf. He pulls

the scarf down to reveal a fine line across his throat, which beings to gape as blood pours out dramatically.

Criminal activities are presented as dangerous, unappealing and frequently fatal. The "hero" Nikolai is a mobster and capable of acts of extreme cruelty, but he also has a kind and protective side, saving the lives of two people in the course of the narrative. While the viewer does not condone his lifestyle he earns their respect, especially when it is revealed that he is working undercover and intends to see Semyon incarcerated for Tatiana's rape. The film's last scene shows him as the new mob boss, sitting alone at a table in Semyon's restaurant. His empty eyes and dead expression do not appear to be that of a victor. The viewer gets the feeling that this is not the life he would have chosen. Within the context of the narrative the depicted criminal activity is unlikely to promote or encourage criminal acts.

Within the context of the narrative women and homosexuals are derided and despised by Semyon and Kirill. The film's central issue is the rape of a 14 year old girl who has been forced into prostitution. As the film's title indicates, she had been promised legitimate work at Semyon's restaurant as a waitress and singer. This suggests that Semyon is involved in human trafficking for the sex industry. Kirill refers to Semyon trading a "little girl from Georgia" for a truck full of wine. Kirill takes Nikolai to Semyon's favourite "stable" and he calls the women "bitches" and "whores". When Anna tells Kirill about his father, Tatiana and the baby he replies, "Slaves give birth to slaves".

Semyon is also homophobic. He expresses disgust at "queers" and blames London for Kirill's homosexuality, although it is never openly acknowledged. The mob has a general disgust for homosexuals and Kirill is so outraged at being accused of being a homosexual that he has his accuser's throat cut. Semyon openly despises his son because he is a homosexual and Kirill loathes himself for the same reason.

Under s3A of the FVPC Act the publication contains offensive language such as "shit", "fuck" and "motherfucker", often presented as subtitles. There are also racist and homophobic comments.

The publication's dominant effect is that of a powerful drama by a renowned director and starring popular actors. It is grittily and realistically presented, tempered with a compassionate undertone in the sub-plot involving Tatiana and her baby. The few scenes depicting violence do so in a horrifying and intense manner.

The publication's unrestricted availability is likely to be injurious to the public good. Its themes would only be comprehensible to adults who would have some knowledge of the issues. Its violent content, while limited in extent, is of an extremely high degree and its presentation is horrifying, particularly the scene that has elements of homoeroticism. It is clearly intended to shock the audience. The blasé and callous attitude with which the criminals undertake tasks such as mutilating a corpse trivialises the value of human life. These aspects are clearly intended for an adult audience and would be disturbing to younger viewers. The criminal characters are presented as multi-faceted and human, each of them capable of kindness and cruelty. This is likely to be confusing to younger viewers who lack a rounded understanding of human nature. Therefore the publication is restricted to an audience of adults.

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

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Date	15.10.07	OFLC Ref	702544
Applicant	FVLB		
Applicant to Labelling Body	Roadshow Film Distributors		
Title (On Screen)	Eastern Promises		
Other Known Title	NLS		
Director/s	David Cronenberg		
Producer/s	Paul Webster		
System Format	Film 35mm	Country of Origin	UK, Canada, USA
Language/s	English, Russian, with English subtitles		

Classification	R18
Descriptive Note	Contains graphic violence and sex scenes.
Excision/s	Date Cleared
Total Running Time	101min 21sec
Total Running Time after Excisions	

Focus Notice search.

0.39 Title: Eastern Promises

Ravi - Storm

0.49 Barber-shop. I remain. I cuts other I hair. Russian - subs. cuts

Under Azim - hair. Youth Scared. A gives him cut hair. Won't take it.

0L - f, Orders upth.

2.13 Hacking throat cut. Gunging. Blood. Saving. Business.

2.25 Street. Feet - Young f. Suponette. Arts

I for help. Thinks she needs methadone.

3. 26 Blood pour from 1 l of bags. Faults. Rhoddy body on gony. Euro I.

3-30 Baby in distress. Burses on arm - needles. Need to get baby out. Cut -

haby Rhoddy. Jimmy. Rhythmic. Queen OR Mum dead. Blood on front - Dr.

Baby and. Clap face. S

4. 29. Bridge. Day. S I Dr on bike.

4. 48 Inside I enters room - Dr asleep.

5. 22 I at table. Reads book. Uncle Stefan. Book from mum's bag. They all on the dead. Trying to find I 10. Jensen. Hummer.

6. 46 To Russ I. Tatiana. Talk re family + death. Left to find better life.

7. 10 lge dog, 2 I. Shady. Yelling. Russian 'bitch'. See I Dr. Leaving. OL Subs. send dad hooker to Xmas. OL!

8. 37 I Dr a midwife. Talks to I. Anna! Restaurant Shady I his son + Kaliel? Hummer. Sentimental Russian - stereotypical.

10. 18 Shows I card. Talk re dead I.

10. 50. Ande's car back. I inside. Relations in car. Inside - A + I talk. I interested re I's diary. I wants to see it. I charming hula from. Smoker too. Phantumi.

12. 28 I by A's bike. Talks to A. Wants to buy bike. Hummer. Hes the chauffeur. She leaves.

13.37 S/C A's home. Dinner. A's broken up w/ Olivei. Humour. S a racist. Bickering 1/3. More racial things. Says it's why her baby died inside her. 2 f. friends. Leave S oblivious.

14.51 S/C Restaurant. Big party. Azmi there. K's phone rings. A watches - suspicious. OL. "f". Humour. K v obvious.

16.22 Night. A's shop. K, A + chauffeur. S vbs. Not dinner - the order taker.

16.56 R/C S/C. Inside. A's nephew - jumpy. Ex. wks. Soccer tickets. Simple boy. "touched by the angels".

17.53 Body in freezer. Throat cut. 1 needlestick. OL. Trivialise death. Laugh. \$ = respect.

Pederast - ? in freezer. Solid.

19.30 Body out - I was here 2 days to there. Body out. Dried blood. Gives A \$ for the hair cut joke.

U - matter of fact - going to remove teeth + fingers. S vbs.

See fingers cut off. X2. Cut - van alleyway. Wrapped corpse of S vbs.

21.23 Body thrown in. It sinks.

21.48 Trafalgar hospital. A is the baby. S^o poignant. She's thinking of hair - cuts.

Cut - A on bike. ← V/O - Russian - excepts from ? diary? Cut - restaurant. A is diary.

She's spied it. I wants original. Asks where A lives. Clearly trying to find out about her. A suspicious.

24. 02 Krivi? (K). Drunk. Sees A leaving - OL - Inside K on floor laughing. Hugs U's legs.

OL & kisses K in pub. + groin. OL. Angr. Dad disgusted.

25. 46 U leaves. A's hike result good. U helps A irritable OL. U a smooth operator.

27. 47 In car. U drives. A asks U re T. Says he's made bone to fix T. She was preg - "in that case I haven't" Talks Age 14. Needle marks. Prostitute. U charming. S suspicious, ponderous.

29. 20 SLK. Beach. Francis. Body UK police. Body still v fresh. Stars on under eyes and jugs. Sand in mouth. Tattoos on body. S needs them. Finger tip off. V realistic. Bnet 9/11.

30 KS A does hair. Uncle S + Mum. He's got the diary. S - serious. Don't tell anyone -> Rape. Needle. Prostitute.

T ended up in hands of Russian mafia. A wants to find T's family to give baby away or else in foster care.

32/48 R/L SLK. Hse ext. Inside. Chick dancer in pole. Clothed. 2nd P sealed. Drugged. Other P kiss each other. Men grope + kiss K + other P. U there. V young I w U. "F" ne sex. U + P kiss. "F" sex. + again. K orders U to have sex now. Smashes bottle.

Grabs pussy & pushes her away. "F" OL. Sex Subs. Power game.

Father's favourite stable as P clean. Mum K in kitchen. U welcome there but does to P more he's no cheer.

35.29. ♀ on all 4s. Naked. P behind K. Mouth
 1/2 - T. Diary. ♀ silent. Business-like.
 K watches. ♀ - sound gone. K claps.
 "Very nice" ♀ leans down. S + fl + silent.
 P OL. tells K to go. ♀ sings.

31.46 Sings. In side. Sad. Cleavage only.
 Naked. Gemtahr obscured too. U asks ♀
 re self. Subs. Comes - wants her to go
 home.

38.16 s/c. A + baby. T's 1/2. Diary. Stated.
 Going to London to get job at restaurant.

38.46 Old P there. A shocked. Nervous. Doesn't
 want P there. Says he's translated
 diary. His son K is in it. Shocked!

A asks context. Bad things re K. Dad
 to deal w K. P says K did illegal
 things - don't give diary to police.

A - only comes about baby. P has address
 for T's family. Do a deal? A nang.

41.17 T's 1/2 one heavy thump down stairs
 by K + hit till bleeding. Tried to rape T but
 couldn't - kept hitting her. K's dad
 raped her. Yelled at K "If u don't
 break a horse it will never be tamed".

A scared re dad. S worried. Hummer
 S - get a gun.

Dad ⇒ Vory V Zacone. OL.

(V) V Wants to swap diary for address.
 Bickering. Covert threat to harm
 baby.

43.52 Motahike enquiry. U fixes it. K -
 present - lots of french wine. OL.
 K - got good deal. Butcher U.

K - talks re hmnus.

45.09 V slams door on K. K's friend
Soyka? dead. V slaps K. K
comes like a child. Subs - U tells
V re K paying to get S killed.
V upset - "don't tell me! U - I got
rid of body. U - S lying re V + family.

Toes trodden on. S a snitch. U a good
peacemaker. V despises K.

47.52 K bosses U about. Cut - fast food
diner. A, unde + mum. U arrives.

Subs - hummer. S's arrogance. A gives U
glance. No address. U has no idea
leaves. A follows. furious.

Calls them bastards who murdered T.
U tells her to be careful. He's not
nice people. S spots in his face.
"Mistake" - Subs.

51.05 S/C U reads diary. T - considers
suicide. They input her heroin.
Dejavu. V talks to U re trust &
love.

52.17 Lies spread by ~~B~~ about K.
Then tells - a drunk + a queer.
Subs. London - city of whores & queers.
Blames London for K. V can't go
home - KGB wanting Subs.

V - kill Steep - has read diary. Burn
diary. So

55.06 S/C A at hospital. U has her bike.
Hummer - charming. Has address.
U says not good place for little
girl. Says to keep busy.

U asks how he can live this way. U - just a driver.

56.54 Asks questions re uncle. A doesn't answer. U leaves.

57.24 Sit. Lge crowds of people. Police. Sports Fans. Soccer. A's nephew. Wrong team colors. Charts wrong name. ~~Called waiter. Drunk. Urinate on a grave.~~

~~ZP grabs throat. Quick. Skin sep of throat - gurgling - opens - blood pours out. Shocked back.~~

Cut - singing at V's restaurant. Birthday. V. Russ. e-mail.

50.25 A in street. Says to V that Chechynovs going to kill A. Spare him if he will deliver K to them. A fears V more than Chechys.

A promises never to listen to K again. C's don't know what K looks like.

Z hatch a plan.

52.52 A reads diary. Made to take pills when preg - to end preg. Wants to kill self tho - to spare child/par.

S^{step} on street. U in car. Watcher.

Cut - A on street. Restaurant. Wants to talk to U. K - tells bitch to keep going.

U = Nikolai. A tells K + U to tell S that the baby was hers.

K goes for her. Grabs face. Anger.

A Eurasian that dad raped child.
OL "sh" U keeps K away.

"Slaves give birth to slaves" U of T.

1.05.06 K "Gul v f'd in front of me". Got taken by police.

S sends K to cellar for brandy. S won't talk business w K, only U.

S asks U re St. Says he dealt in him - Subs. Wants U to join.

1.07.09 Cellar. K drinks + sings. U arrives.
"my dad snapped a little girl from Georgia for this shit" - the niece.

1.08.44 S offered U stars - he accepted. K hugs U tender. K says it was his idea. K v low self esteem. Te abuse.

1.10.39 R/C. S/C. car. Night. 5 Men at restaurant. Subs. S welcomes them. Criminal types.

1.11.28 U in underwear. Subs re U's family + history in crime. Prison. Benton. Solitary.
"My father was a hitch hiker. Men a whore. Taking family away symbolically. I have no mum or dad. Ritual. S Penis can't chaus. V symbolic. V dramatic language. Poetic.

1.13.28 Talk to kit. Gets stars on his knees. New stars on chest.

1.14.12 A's room. Mum. Step not home or at sister's. Worried.

1.14.59 S/C. U's car. A on street. Bath here. A + U in towels on.

Several men in tunnels. Discuss business.
OL. Humour.

Talk re Lin 10. TV's has "cargos" in.
A goes to bathroom. Laughing!

1.17.28 A dresses. Nervous. Z P - who killed
his nephew. Says K is U. Can tell
from the stains on him.

Z P go in. look for "K".

Nasty knife. Showing. Slab. Flakes of
peels. Punching. + mashing. Lade.
Slasher down chat. Z & P + blood

Crunch kick to knee. Lade + Slake.

P slabs P & Z on knife. Running.
Slashing. Nasty SFT. Punching.
Killing. Thrustling. V strong SFT.
Clashing.

U - knife. Holds behind head. Pushes U
head down. Nasty SFT - P gasping
& moaning. Dies.

U cracks pain. Body body. Body
next to him - knife in dirt.

Not dead - grabs U by throat. Blood pool
Then to stab U in knife in his own
chest - U breaks arm. Stabs P in eye.
Nasty SFT. They collapse - P dead.

1.21.48 Hospital - It's U. In hospital
bed. to sut. P asleep. Wakes.

1.22.37 She asks re St. Asks where he is
Scotland. Omises + cuts on U.
Explains he had to go - knew Z
much - couldn't tell him. Old school.
Exile or death.

1.23.49 Police to see U. Bloody bandages.
cuts.

U wanting for police. Subs.
Humour - used dead body to file
progress report.

Russ - Wants undercover operation terminated.

U - wanting his prestige position.
Wants going to replace Simon as boss
of London. Almost him for rape.

Explains re 14 yr old - T. Have baby,
not DNA - prove baby his.

1.26.10 K blows up balloons. K blamed S for U
injury.

1.27.14 CCTV - police outside. K warned.

1.27.38 R/C. Kitchen - S enters. Gps gone.
Task blood. DL. "fing queer disease".

1.28.16 Taxi. Night. Hospital. A - K in lift.
She runs to see ~~the~~ baby - it's gone.
flourish in its place. Pushes U - asks re
baby.

1.29.16 Car. Night. K - baby in sports bag in back.
S v drama.

A + U on bike.

K hugs bag. Cries over it. Baby in it begs
for goodness. Baby cries.

Kisses it. He doesn't want to do it.
A is talking to it. "She's just a
little girl".

U talks to K. "We don't kill babies".
S gone too far.

Subs. U + K hug. K relieved

"with him or with me?" - U to K

1.32.10 Baby back to A. U hugs K. Tells him:
his boss now. Dad going away.
Partners now. K wishes off - happy.

U keeps his cover. V caring P.

1.33.42 U + A kiss. U says good bye.

1.34.43 U + K embrace + leave.

1.34.49 A's house. Mum + St. Baby cries + plays.
A's now. 50

1.35.51 T's Mo - U at table in restaurant.
Vio ne finding better life.

U king now - empty book.

1.36.27 Div DC.

Pwd: Paul Webster, Robert Lantos

Vigo Mortensen, Naomi Watts,
Vincent Cassel, A Amin Meuller - Skant.

Sonyka.

Stepan.

1.41.21 End