

Children's films are just a bore

A Children's Express survey of 10 and 11-year-olds reveals that almost all have watched 12, 15 or 18 certificate videos, usually with their parents' help.

*Forget about U and PG films - they are rarely worth watching, say Plymouth's children. A survey of children aged 10 and 11 from across the city shows that almost all of them have watched 15- or 18-rated films, **usually with their parents' help**. The study was conducted by members of Children's Express, the young people's news agency, who report on their findings.*

"My mum let me watch Kevin and Perry Go Large" (15 certificate) says one 11-year-old girl. Her mother wasn't worried about the swearing. "But she was worried about my little sister coming into my bedroom and watching it." Her sister is eight.

A survey of more than 250 10- and 11-year-olds in primary schools across Plymouth, conducted by Children's Express, suggests her family is typical. Almost every child - 96 per cent - had seen videos intended for older children or teenagers. More surprisingly, 17 out of 20 said they got their parents to rent the films for them.

Children generally agree: U and PG certificate films are rarely worth watching. A few do not even rate 15s. Most children expect Harry Potter to be a hit, but even Shrek got mixed reviews from kids, and anything with dalmatians, cartoon fish and the rest can forget it.

One 11-year-old told us: "The films for our age are too sad - we're too grown-up." While his 10-year-old classmate said: "U films are for babies."

Girls agree. "Children's films are boring," one wrote. "I want to see some action". A 10-year-old boy had bad news for Hollywood: "I'm too old for Disney," he said.

"The higher the age certificate, the better the film," one girl said. Us and PGs can become very predictable, and children want to be surprised. "It's exciting not knowing what is going to happen," said one boy.

Older films make children feel more grown up, but getting hold of them is supposed to be difficult. 12, 15 and 18 certificates are legal restrictions on renting or buying videos and DVDs.

But many children don't even think about the certificate. "My mum is always there so I can get the one I want, even if it's rated for older people," said one girl. Many others wrote similar comments. Only a few said their parents ever intervened. "I check the certificate because my parents might say 'no' if it is really dirty," one girl told us.

The most popular films are the scary ones, especially with girls. Children often show off at school by swapping notes on their favourite horror films. The Blair Witch Project and the Scream trilogy are popular, though experts prefer the likes of Candyman (18) or Nightmare on Elm Street. Children who don't join in are described as 'chickens'.

Some fans watch for the gore. An 11-year-old boy who says he regularly watches action and horror films, wrote: "I like seeing blood and guts, and people dying or swearing. I like seeing sexual scenes and I like to laugh".

"I like watching really scary films and the 18s are the scariest," said a 10-year-old girl. "They're better than kid videos," said another, "and we know nearly all the foul language."

But it isn't four letter words that keep them awake at night. A boy who watches a lot of horror films - sometimes alone in his bedroom - wrote: "I feel quite scared after watching. I have nightmares." And a girl whose mother rents 18 certificate films, which they watch together, told us: "Sometimes I feel a bit scared when I go to the toilet or upstairs by myself."

Although many said horror films did not affect them, dozens of others wrote about bad dreams and loss of sleep. But they keep watching - many children love a good fright.

One girl put it this way: "I feel perfectly scared and a bit wobbly."

Rosie, 11, is an exception. "I don't watch 15s and 18s that are horror because they scare the living daylights out of me. I can't sleep for days afterwards, and my mum wouldn't rent them out anyway because most of the time it's a school night."

Action films were boys' second favourite, getting 29 per cent of the vote. "I like watching fighting, the blood and weapons," said one.

"I just got bored after nine years watching PGs all the time," said Dominic, nine. "I want to see something more exciting."

These films can be very involving. Explaining how they make them feel, one boy wrote simply: "I want to fight," while another wanted "to copy and do the stunts." A third described the adrenalin rush this way: "I feel like I've just been killed, or shot someone."

Do parents know their children feel like this? Who knows? But most of the children we surveyed said their parents either did not care what they watched, or were happy to support them.

Children want to be entertained - but most of the films made for us are predictable and babyish. It is no wonder we go looking for adventure in other films, especially as the laws which are meant to protect children from scenes of sex, violence, bad language and drug-taking, don't work.

Children of 10 and 11 don't care about such restrictions, but that's OK.

Their parents don't care either.

About the team

Survey findings

Children's Express surveyed 263 children aged 10 and 11 in Plymouth: 123 boys and 140 girls.

140 children - 53% - said they watched age-restricted videos more than once a month. 111 said their parents hired or bought them for them.

114 children - 43% - said they watched such films occasionally. 103 said their parents were involved.

In total, 84% of the children who watched age-restricted videos said their parents rented them for them.

The most popular genres were Horror (46%) followed by Action (17%) and Comedy (16%).

This article was produced by editor Michael Roberts, 15, with Jodie Tremblett, 12 and Stephanie Chapman, 11. Reporters: James Watkins, 12, Susan Parnell and Vicky Palmer, 11. It was published in the Plymouth [Evening Herald](#).

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