



Counterfeit label?

In May 2007, the MPAA announced that “all smoking will be considered” as a factor in movie ratings. But apparently, that’s not what happened.

Only 4 out of 34 films with smoking, rated PG or PG-13 after the MPAA’s announcement and opening wide, were even labeled for tobacco. And none of their ratings were changed.

Some indie films and others destined for video or limited release were labeled for “brief,” “incidental” or “momentary” smoking. Meanwhile, the MPAA’s own Rating Administration ignored major national releases from MPAA members Disney, GE, News Corp., Sony, Time Warner, and Viacom that delivered billions of tobacco impressions to theater audiences.

Last May, some press reports said the MPAA would rate smoking films “R.” And MPAA statements may have misled parents to think that any movie without a tobacco label would be harmless.

If public expectations were raised, they will now be deeply disappointed.

Keeping tobacco labels off movies that expose tens of millions of moviegoers, while slapping them on films slated for limited or video release, looks like a program designed “for show.”

Especially because there’s no evidence that merely labeling films will deliver a health benefit.

The real answer, an industry-wide R-rating, is long overdue. Effective and fair (it exempts depictions of tobacco’s health consequences and portrayals of actual historical characters, including documentary subjects), the R-rating will clear smoking from future kid-rated movies. And save 60,000 lives a year.

Accept no substitute.



SmokeFreeMovies.ucsf.edu

Read the 1-year report on MPAA tobacco ratings at <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ctcre/tcpmus/MPAA2008>