
Appendix

CBSC Decision File 01/02-0217

Showcase re *Queer as Folk*

The Complaint

The following complaint dated November 15, 2001 was sent to the CBSC:

CBSC

Please accept this formal complaint about a program aired on Showcase, November 12/01. See attached letter to Showcase detailing my complaint.

November 13/01

Showcase

To Whom It May Concern;

I have left a message complaining about a program called "Queerfolk"?? which played on November 12/01 around 10:00pm.

I was appalled to see blatant, explicit sexual acts playing on my television screen.

I am formally requesting that you hold that tape and am asking the Broadcast Standards Council to review what you have deemed to be appropriate for television.

I expect only written communication from you.

Broadcaster Response

The broadcaster responded to the complainant's letter on November 29 with the following:

Showcase appreciates and considers all viewer feedback and we thank you for taking the time to express your concerns about our programming. We regret that you were offended by Showcase's broadcast of *Queer as Folk* on November 12, 2001.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain Showcase's programming policy. It is our programming mandate at Showcase to offer an alternative to other broadcasters' offerings. One way that we have achieved this distinction is to broadcast high-quality international drama series and world-class films. The decision to air *Queer as Folk* is consistent with Showcase's mandate to be the number one destination for critically-acclaimed programming from around the world.

Queer as Folk, a drama based on Britain's provocative series of the same name, depicts the lives of a group of gay men and women living in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. The series has garnered significant critical acclaim in North America for its brave, realistic, funny and sometimes graphic slice of gay life, focusing on the relationships, careers, loves and ambitions of the characters. The Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales selected *Queer as Folk* as one of the year's Top 10 television programs, citing "it gets points just for its courage in presenting a totally unapologetic portrait of part of the homosexual subculture."

We understand that certain sex scenes may have caused you grave concern. Our view is that these scenes must be viewed within the context of the program as a whole. The sex scenes depicted in *Queer as Folk* are consensual and are essential to the story line. They help define the emotional relationships of the characters and their experiences.

Queer as Folk is intended for adult audiences only and Showcase has taken steps to broadcast this series responsibly. Before we decide to broadcast a program, our Programming Department screens it to ensure that it is suitable for broadcast. The determination of suitability includes ensuring that the broadcast would not contravene applicable broadcast laws and industry codes including, but not limited to, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) "Code of Ethics", the CAB "Sex-Role Portrayal Code for Television and Radio Programming", and the "Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming".

In addition, Showcase also complies with the new program classification system developed by the Action Group on Violence on Television to give Canadian parents the most advanced control system in the world. This six-level rating system is used to classify any levels of violence, language or sex/nudity in all drama, feature film and children's programming broadcast in Canada. The "18+" icon was shown during our broadcast of *Queer as Folk* to warn parents that this film contains themes or content elements which might not be suitable for viewers under the age of eighteen.

We are also concerned with the content of shows broadcast during hours when children may be watching. As required by the Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming, Showcase is sensitive to the scheduling of programs with violent and other adult-oriented content. Such programming may not be aired prior to 9 p.m. However, in the case of *Queer as Folk*, it was decided that an even later viewing time (10 p.m.) would be appropriate so as to lower the likelihood of younger viewers inadvertently seeing the program.

Finally, in order to assist our viewers in making their viewing choices, we run a viewer advisory before such programs indicating whether they contain scenes of violence, nudity and/or coarse language. In this instance a viewer advisory warning of scenes with violence, nudity and coarse language was before the broadcast of *Queer as Folk* and after each commercial break.

It is certainly not our intention to offend our viewers but to introduce them to the wealth of quality, unique drama from Canada and around the world. Not all shows will suit all tastes, but we have tried to construct the Showcase schedule to deliver something for everyone, and to permit viewers to make their choices on an informed basis.

Thank you for taking the time to voice your concerns. We do appreciate feedback and hope that this letter has addressed your concerns.

Additional Correspondence

The complainant returned her Ruling Request dated December 10 along with the following letter:

To Whom It May Concern;

Please allow me the following comments before reviewing "Queer as Folk".

When I go to the cinema to see a "R" rated movie, I expect that the sexually explicit scenes and some violence, some language will be edited out of the movie to be shown on television regardless of the hour it is played. It is. I always thought it was out of respect for the Canadian "public". I believe that this or any other television program should be no different.

Is an explicit sexual courting and explicit sex between a high school student and a thirty something man fall within our country's guidelines of what is acceptable for television?

I read in the brochure that you will view an episode of the program in question. Do watch the program shown on Nov. 12. I do not watch this program. It could be that I happened on "the" episode that was inappropriate.