
APPENDIX

CBSC Decision 09/10-0259

The Comedy Network re a promotional spot for *The Roast of Joan Rivers*

The Complaint

The CBSC received the following complaint dated October 9, 2009:

To whom it may concern:

On Friday, September 11 & Saturday, September 12th, the television broadcaster The Comedy Network aired a promotion for Comedy Central's *Roast of Joan Rivers* depicting several old women getting physically assaulted with such force as to be thrown to the ground or floor, without provocation. Both ads aired at approx 1:30 pm on each date.

As this was deemed to be "programming" rather than "advertising", the ASC advised me to refer this matter to you. I consider this ad objectionable for self-evident reasons.

Thank you for your consideration.

Broadcaster Response

The Comedy Network replied to the complainant with a letter dated November 13:

The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) has forwarded to us a copy of your correspondence dated October 9th, 2009, regarding the program *The Roast of Joan Rivers* which aired on The Comedy Network on September 11th and 12th, 2009, between 1:30 pm and 2:00 pm ET, for our attention and response.

Before I address your specific concern, it should be noted that The Comedy Network follows the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' (CAB) *Code of Ethics, Equitable Portrayal Code, and Voluntary Code regarding Violence in Television Programming*. (If you would like to view the CAB codes, you may do so at www.cbcs.ca). The Comedy Network is a member in good standing of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council and follows the Council's standards and guidelines.

The roasts are a very popular series of specials where comedians salute one another. The comedians are usually quite verbally harsh to one another. In this case, Joan Rivers, a woman of 83 [*sic*, 76 according to other sources] was the subject of the roast and so the promo plays on the idea of "taking down" an old lady. As noted in your letter, it does depict older women being struck in the face, knocked down. The intention is for humour to be derived from the mild shock factor at seeing older women brawling, which is unusual.

For broadcasters, feedback like yours is so important. It helps us to see the programming and promotions in a different light. Personally, I initially viewed this promo as amusing in the manner it was intended. Upon reviewing it to respond to your complaint, I can see how it

might be disturbing to some viewers. We regret that the imagery in the promo for *The Roast of Joan Rivers* offended you. It is no longer airing and we will see to it that it doesn't air again in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to send us your concerns. It benefits all our viewers.

We hope that we have addressed your concern in regards to this program.

Additional Correspondence

The complainant filed his Ruling Request on December 4 and added the following comments:

What is depicted is not a cheerfully demented scenario like two old ladies having a boxing match or ultimate fighting cage bout, but ten elderly women being assaulted without provocation in five seconds. It alienates the audience & doesn't belong in a TV ad.