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**CANADIAN BROADCAST STANDARDS COUNCIL  
ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

CFCF-TV re Matrix

(CBSC Decision 93/94-0166)

Decided December 6, 1995

J. Deschênes (Chair), P. Audet, Y. Chouinard, R. Cohen (*ad hoc*),  
L. Harvey

**THE FACTS**

CFCF-TV had been airing an action series called *Matrix* at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday evenings. Shortly after the *CAB Violence Code* came into effect in January 1994, a Westmount viewer sent an undated letter to the CBSC complaining about the hour at which the series was being screened. The viewer put his complaint in the following terms:

The new CAB rules as pertains to TV programs safe for family viewing are unequivocal "programming which contains scenes of violence intended for adult audiences shall not be telecast before the late evening viewing period, defined as 9 p.m. to 6 a.m."

Clearly [the] program director of CFCF-12 has chosen to disregard these precepts and air a program called Matrix which has absolutely no redeeming values at 8 p.m. on Saturday. This program does not belong on the airwaves at this time and should be moved to a later viewing time, preferably 10 p.m. This flaunting of regulations established to protect the more impressionable young viewer is totally unacceptable and CFCF-12 should be firmly reminded of their responsibility to the Canadian public.

The letter was forwarded by the CBSC to the broadcaster, who responded to the viewer on March 7. While the response was brief, it did deal with the issue with

some precision in terms of the station's actions. The Vice President of Programming stated:

I am sure you will be pleased to know that CFCF 12 has moved *Matrix* to 9.00 PM on Fridays effective March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1994. *Matrix* was not televised during CTV's Olympic coverage.

For your information, CTV will be taking *Matrix* off the air in April.

The viewer was unsatisfied with this response and requested that the CBSC refer the matter to the appropriate Regional Council for adjudication.

## **THE DECISION**

The CBSC's Quebec Regional Council considered the complaint under the *Violence Code* of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB). Article 3.1.1 of that Code reads as follows:

3.1.1 Programming which contains scenes of violence intended for adult audiences shall not be telecast before the late evening viewing period, defined as 9 pm to 6 am.

The Regional Council members viewed a tape of the episode of the program most closely related in time to the date the complaint was received by the Council and reviewed all of the correspondence. The Council considers that the episode viewed does not breach the provisions of the *CAB Violence Code*.

### **The Content of the Program**

The decision in this case turned on the content of the single episode of *Matrix* which was seen by the Regional Council. In the view of the members, the episode in question was undoubtedly an action-oriented segment but it did not contain elements which could have been described as "scenes of violence intended for adult audiences", much less gratuitous violence. There were elements of both action and suspense but the one scene which included *any* violence involved an individual being struck by a car. In the circumstances, the Council is of the view that the program does not meet the content requirement which would have resulted in the application of Article 3.1.1, thereby necessitating the airing of the program after 9:00 p.m.

The Council does acknowledge that there may have been other episodes of the series which contained such material; it was not, however, made aware of any such episodes which may have been run between the time of the complaint letter and the

date as of which the series was shifted to the 9:00 p.m. Friday night program slot. In other words, no *additional* complaints were received reflecting such a problem. In the circumstances, the Council does not consider that *Matrix* breaches the *CAB Violence Code*.

### **The Broadcaster's Response**

The CBSC always recognizes the broadcaster's obligation, as a CBSC member, to be responsive to complainants. In this case, the Regional Council considers that the response from the broadcaster dealt with the fundamental question raised by the complainant. Whether as the result of *this* complaint, other complaints or the station's own judgment, the broadcaster ceased airing the program in the potentially offensive time slot. Furthermore, the station announced that the program would no longer be broadcast at all after April. Consequently, the station dealt with the substance of the complaint and did not breach the Council's standard of responsiveness.

*This decision is a public document upon its release by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. It may be reported, announced or read by the station against which the complaint had originally been made; however, in the case of a favourable decision, the station is under no obligation to announce the result.*