

## LIFESTYLE

# Sweden Sexist Film Rating Is Not About Restrictions, But Opening Conversations

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When deciding whether a film is suitable for audiences, they tend to be rated on the level of nudity, sex, and/or violence. But Swedish cinema-goers will now have another metric to decide whether or not a film is for them: one based on gender equality.

In order to attain an “A” rating, the film must first pass the “Bechdel” test.

According to The Associated Press, this means that “it must have at least two named female characters who talk to each other about something other than a man”.



**Ellen Tejlé, director of Stockholm art-house cinema Bio Rio, with the “A” rating card**

The “Bechdel” test is a hat tip to cartoonist Alison Bechdel. She described this test in her 1985 comic strip [“Dykes To Watch Out For”](#) and it has since

become a popular way for critics to denote whether or not a work can be described as feminist.

Sounds simple enough.

But, as Ellen Tejle director of Stockholm art-house cinema [Bio Rio](#) explains, many well-known films are far from straight A students.

[“The entire ‘Lord of the Rings’ trilogy, all ‘Star Wars’ movies, ‘The Social Network,’ ‘Pulp Fiction’ and all but one of the ‘Harry Potter’ movies fail this test.”](#) she says.

“The goal is to see more female stories and perspectives on cinema screens,” explains Tejle.

Anna Read, founder of the [London Feminist Film Festival](#) (24 – 30 November 2013), welcomes the rating system and is optimistic about the conversations it will inspire.

“Too often [women](#) are presented in a narrow, stereotypical way in films and that has an impact on how women view themselves and what they can achieve in the world - if you can’t see it, you can’t be it,” she tells HuffPost UK Lifestyle. “It’s getting people talking and thinking about the representation of women in films and how women’s stories and perspectives are largely missing from mainstream cinema.”

[BJ Epstein, HuffPost UK blogger and lecturer in gender studies](#), hopes that eventually the world will not need such ratings.

“One day film-makers will start to make movies that are less sexist and more balanced in their depiction of the genders,” she tells HuffPost UK Lifestyle. “Women will no longer be portrayed as just sex objects, home-makers, people desperate to find men, or similar.”

But she fears others may not share her optimism, suspecting that the rating system will be mocked by critics.

“We already rate films based on their age-appropriateness, which we tend to judge by issues such as violence, language, and sexual content. Why shouldn’t we also rate films based on how sexist they are? This is equally as important and also affects viewers of movies, just as violence does.”

*What do you think of the new rating system?*

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