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Channel Will Edit 'Simpsons' to Comply With Media Law

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A cartoon channel will cut certain scenes of violence from episodes of “The Simpsons,” above, to comply with a new media law.

A day after reports surfaced that two classic Soviet cartoons could be edited to ensure that they do not run afoul of a new media law, a popular cartoon channel announced that it would cut violent scenes from Western hit "The Simpsons" and move "South Park" to a different time slot to comply with the legislation.

The head of 2x2 television, Lev Makarov, said the network would "retouch" some episodes of "The Simpsons" to meet the requirements of a new law regulating children's programming.

The law, which was passed in 2010 and comes into effect Saturday, stipulates that programs containing scenes of violence be deemed appropriate only for children aged 16 and older, and only if the scenes contain a "negative attitude" to the violence.

The law also says that programs containing scenes of drinking, drugs and other vices qualify as "adult programming," which can be aired only after 11 p.m.

Some episodes of "The Simpsons," an American creation about a middle-class family living in a suburban town, contain scenes from a show called "Itchy and Scratchy," a darkly humorous parody of the "Tom and Jerry" cartoon about a cat chasing a mouse. Itchy and Scratchy, also a cat and a mouse, repeatedly harm each other in absurd, graphically violent ways.

2x2 said in a statement late Wednesday that "Itchy and Scratchy" episodes would be removed from "The Simpsons."

The broadcaster said "South Park" will begin to be shown only after 11 p.m.

"Programs that contain scenes that fall under the new legislation will be retouched with a bit of irony," Makarov said in a statement e-mailed to The Moscow Times.

2x2, which has been airing foreign, adult-oriented cartoons since 2007, has gained a cult following among Russian teenage audiences.

In 2008, several hundred fans of the channel staged demonstrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg after prosecutors issued a warning to the channel, saying that some of its cartoons contained "extremist" material.

The channel did not reply to a request for comment on why it had not prepared for the legislation earlier.

On Wednesday, prominent Soviet and Russian cartoon director Alexei Kotyonochkin said he was against the re-editing of popular cartoon series "Nu, Pogodi," in which one of the leading characters, Wolf, smokes cigarettes. Under the new law, broadcasters fear the show would have to be edited to remove scenes of Wolf smoking or be shown only after 11 p.m.

Deputy head of the Federal Mass Media Inspection Service Maxim Ksenzov told reporters Wednesday that "Nu, Pogodi" could be exempted from the legislation because of its cultural value.

Film critic Yury Gladilshchikov said the stir surrounding the possible editing of beloved cartoons might be aimed at trying to damage the image of Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky, who has been criticized by some observers for his conservative values.

"For me it is an acid test for all of us, plus a typical bureaucratic fear. But maybe some political games also play a role here," Gladilshchikov said.

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