

National College of Art and Design

Faculty of Design and Department of Fashion and Textiles

**One Hundred and One Dalmatians: Conducting a study of
the film '*One Hundred and One Dalmatians*' as a cultural
artefact.**

by

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Table of Contents.

page number

Acknowledgements.

List of plates.

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Advertising and Promotion of the Film ' <i>One Hundred and One Dalmatians</i> ' and the Attraction of Audiences to the Film.	7
Chapter 2: Disney as a Global Entertainment Corporation offering Consumers a Total Cultural Package.	18
Chapter 3: The Film and Consumers.	26
Chapter 4: The Effects of the Film on the Fashion Industry.	29
Chapter 5: The Power of Disney and the Effects of the Film on Dogs.	43
Conclusions:	49

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

Table 1.1

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List of Plates.

page number

Fig. 1a.	Scene from the film.	2
Fig. 1b.	Scene from the film.	2
Fig. 2.	Cruella de Vil's snow-bound estate, designed by production designer Asheton Gorton.	4
Fig. 3.	Film advertisement and competition.	8
Fig. 4.	Photocall to promote a special premiere of the film 'One Hundred and One dalmatians' to raise funds for the children's charity 'Angels Quest'.	12
Fig. 5.	Photographs of the 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' film premiere in Dublin.	14
Fig. 6.	'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' back pack.	21
Fig. 7.	More 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' accessories.	21
Fig. 8.	The effects of Dalmatian inspiration on design.	22
Fig. 9.	Pages from Disney's 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' interactive web site.	24
Fig. 10.	Children's fashions at Debenhams	31
Fig. 11.	Cruella-inspired outfit by Vivienne Westwood, Katherine Hamnett, Eric Halley and Philip Treacy.	33
Fig. 12.	More fashion inspired by the film.	35
Fig. 13.	Cruella-inspired fashion.	36
Fig. 14.	The extravagantly-costumed Cruella de Vil.	38
Fig. 15.	Fashion with 'fun fur' inspired by the film.	40
Fig. 16.	Fashion with a 'fun feel' inspired by the Dalmatians.	42

Introduction

One Hundred and One Dalmatians was filmed in 1996 by **Disney**. It was based on the classic children's story written by **Dodie Smith** which has become well-known through the animated film version previously released by Disney in 1961. Even as far back as when it was first released as a children's 'doggy fairytale' on the 19th November 1956, **Alan Melville**, in a glowing tribute on a BBC radio programme announced that the book would become a '*canine classic*'. (Grove, 1996, p.240).

One Hundred and One Dalmatians is a great rescue adventure story in which the animals are the main characters. The story begins with two Dalmatian dogs called **Pongo** and **Perdita** who meet and fall in love, and with a little encouragement from them, so do their owners, **Rodger** and **Anita**. A double wedding follows, and then the dogs have fifteen puppies who are kidnapped by Anita's ex-employer and evil fur-loving cousin, **Cruella de Vil**, and her two henchmen, **Jasper** and **Horace**. The two dogs set about rescuing the puppies, who along with eighty-four other Dalmatian puppies are going to be made into a fur coat for her (**Cruella's**) winter wardrobe. They are helped by a network of dogs around the city and countryside who direct them to where the puppies are being held by the "twilight bark, an oral telegraph system for relaying messages amongst the dog world."

The puppies are eventually rescued during the mayhem caused by the other animals and birds in the film. As with all **Disney** fairytales, the villains get what's coming to them and the heroes win through, and in this case, all the Dalmatians and **Rodger**, **Anita** and their child live happily ever after together in a big Dalmatian house with lots of land for the Dalmatians. (fig. 1a and 1b).



Fig.1a Scene from the film



Fig.1b Scene from the film

Disney is a powerful, global, culture-producing corporation with its own distribution company, 'Buena Vista' and, therefore, was able to cover all aspects of the film, from its **making** to its **marketing**, from the production of merchandised goods to its advertising.

Disney is a highly successful company that feeds off itself to maintain its different divisions, theme parks, television networks (that advertise its goods and films) and of course its movie studios. The company has a whole archive of animated classics to which they own the rights. According to **Trish Long** of 'Buena Vista', it was the president of the company who came up with the idea to take these stories and actually make them work in a strong family live-action way. **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** was chosen by him as an ideal example for this kind of film. (Foster, November 27th, 1997).

Everyone expects that first and foremost, a **Disney** film will look good. The scenery, for example, is always enchanting. **Asheton Gorton** was the production designer of the set for '**One Hundred and One Dalmatians**', and so had an important role to play in the production of the film. "Walt Disney's powerful style had a strong influence on **Gorton's** own design. (fig. 2). Animation has a certain magic to it, and so they had to keep that **Disney** magic in the live-action version. As **John Gainsborough** tells us,

*"We've taken Walt's artist's interpretation of the real world and reinterpreted it, getting somewhere back between the reality the animated picture was based on and reality of a live picture. This can't just look like another picture because it's not. It's a **Walt Disney** picture, and it has a signature and attention to detail just like all **Disney** movies do."*
(American cinematographer, November 1996, p.79).

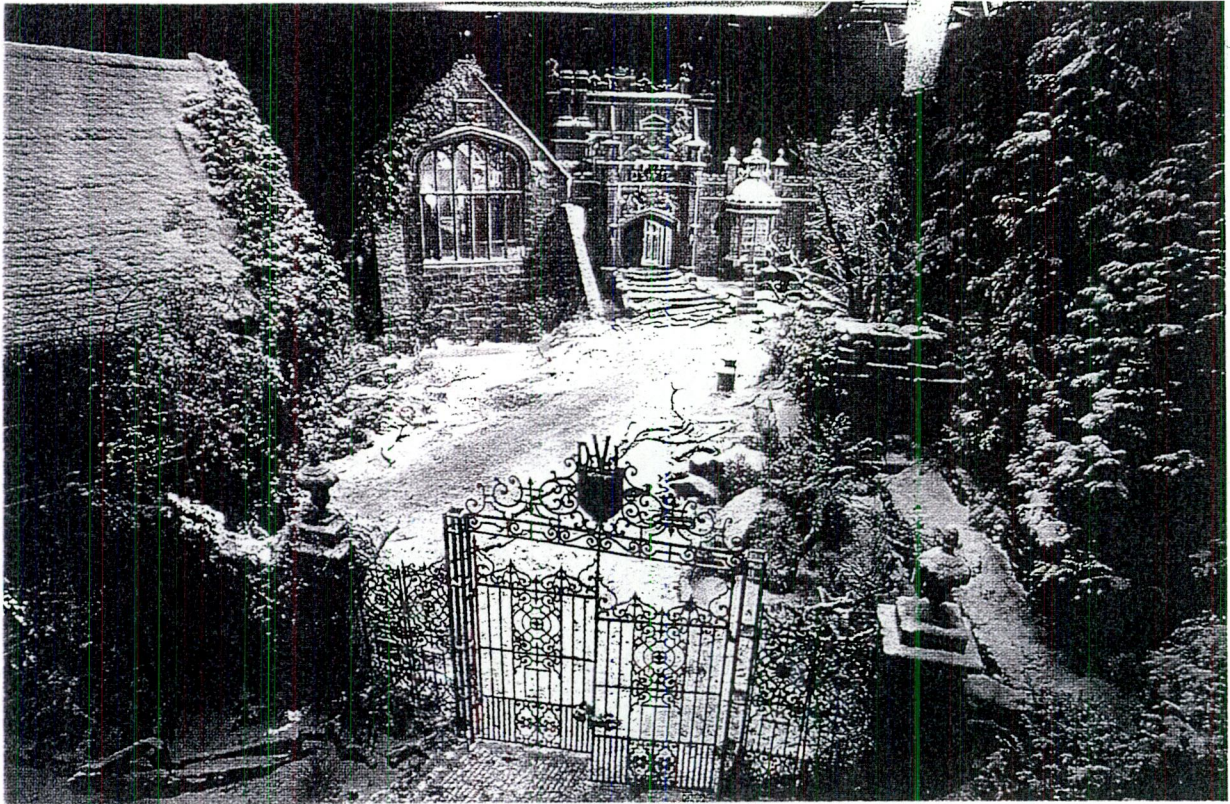


Fig.2 Cruella De Vils snow-bound estate, designed by production designer Asheton Gorton.

Walt Disney came to Hollywood in 1923. He put all his money into films and the development of a studio, which improved animation standards and produced a superior product. One of the secrets to Disney's success was that he insisted on owning the films he produced and controlling the character merchandising. Snow White was the first ever, long animated cartoon, and it achieved immense critical and commercial success earning \$8 million on the original release. Disney soon realised that feature films had to become the studio's main focus. In the 1950s Disney formed its own distribution channel called Buena Vista. Some time in the late 1940s Disney became interested in an Amusement Park. Disney then created an organisation to plan, design and administer the Park called Disneyland. At the end of 1952, Walt Disney Incorporated was founded and Retlaw was set up through which he controlled the merchandising rights to his name. Disney also offered weekly TV shows to ABC in return for the capital to help with the financing of Disneyland. This was important to both the park's success and as a regular advertising medium both before and after the park's completion and for forthcoming films. Following the success of Disneyland, for the first time the company was placed on a stable financial footing. In 1952 profits were approximately \$0.5 million; by 1959 they were \$3.4 million and by 1965 they were \$11million.

From the time of the original animated version's release, the first Disney animated feature in a contemporary setting One Hundred and One Dalmatians has broken many film boundaries.. (Sight & sound, April 1995, p.55). One Hundred and One Dalmatians was also "*a truly transitional object, weaning the studio off its cautious commitment to classic storylines and traditional animation methods.*" (Thomas, 1991, p.106). It was also the first time the studio used xerography in animation. The live-action film cost Disney around \$40 million to make whereas the animated version of 1961 cost \$4 million over three years. Both film versions also earned far more than they cost to produce. The live-action version of 1996 also broke the World's thanksgiving box-office take in America, with a \$46m 5-day gross, which was \$3m more than the previous record holder 'Back to the Future 2'.

The live-action version was not the first time Disney had ever worked with live animals. The Director, Stephen Herek, did not want to be locked into the style of the cartoon, and so opted for the live-action medium. He made a few changes by updating the story, but still keeping the romance and the old-fashioned view of London. The production designer, Asheton, refused to view the animated version until he had finished making the set for the live-action version, as he did not want to be influenced by the original. In the live-action version the animals do not speak, all communication is conveyed simply and effectively through actions and expressions, giving one a sense of a separate “doggy” world. Also, this time around, Anita is a fashion designer working for the house of ‘*de Vil*’ which is owned by Cruella de Vil, her cousin, who in the animated version was an old school friend of Anita. Furthermore, Rodger is no longer a musician, but a video games programmer, which helps to give the film a much more modern feel. Other changes include the fact that the live-action version ends differently to the animated version. There is no great car chase in the end, instead Cruella meets her end on a farm with the help of the farm animals. In the original version Rodger makes a hit song which was a satirical swipe at Cruella. In the new version, however, Rodger’s computer game is a winner because it uses a scary image of Cruella as the villain. On the proceeds, Anita and Rodger are set up in a large spotted house in the country where they live with all the Dalmatians.

Chapter 1: Advertising & Promotion of the Film 101 Dalmatians and the Attraction of Audiences to the Film.

Advertising works by connecting the **customer** to the **product**. In this instance it plays a crucial role in the success of the film. People will not go to see a film which they have never heard of, or that they know nothing about. Advertising creates an **awareness** of a particular movie; it informs people that this movie has been made and it seeks to persuade the consumers of how wonderful it is. Film advertising has the power to turn a film, basically a **non-essential** product into something we must see. It exposes us to images from the film reminding us that the film is 'now showing' in the cinema, making it **all** the more important to us that we see it soon, before time runs out. In order for the film to become **real** and **tangible** for us, we should go to see it, and experience it. Thus it is the marketing, promotion and advertising of the film that catches our attention and suggests that it is **culturally** or **socially** imperative that we see it. It was **Rosser Reeves** who transformed advertising almost overnight from low-keyed **salesmanship** into high-powered persuasion. Known along **Madison Avenue** as "*the blacksmith*", he believed that **commercials** should be mind-pulverising. To be effective they had to bludgeon people into buying. (Meyer, 1985, p.22).

According to **Trish Long** the advertising strategies used for this film were intended firstly to create an awareness of the film, and secondly, but more importantly, to make people aware that this was not a re-release of the animated version of **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**, but a new live-action version. They stressed this on advertising posters by stating '*This time the magic is real*'. (fig. 3). Long also maintained that they used **multilayered** advertisement **strategies** in promoting the new film, including a television advertising campaign aimed at families and young children. (Foster, 27th November, 1997).

This time, the magic is real.



DALMATIANS

AT CINEMAS ACROSS THE UK FROM DECEMBER 13TH

DISCOVER THE MAGIC WITH PAUL MITCHELL



Win a holiday to WALT DISNEY WORLD FLORIDA, plus other fantastic prizes!

'It's a love affair'

Enter our children's drawing competition and you could host your own Gala evening.

Expires 18.12.96.

Visit the 101 Dalmatians Internet Site at <http://www.101.co.uk>.

Available from participating salons. No purchase necessary.

PAUL MITCHELL®

L U X U R Y H A I R C A R E

Fig.3 Film advertisement and competition

101 Dalmatians

Commercial television today is based on the principle that the **networks** deliver the audience to the advertisers and to this effect the campaign was implemented. **Disney** used a strong mix of advertising, including full-page colour advertisements which sent out the signal of a big family and a big budget movie. This strategy was predicated upon the principle that **John Izod** describes: that the public respond to the attraction of films marketed as having been made at lavish expense. (Izod, 1988, p.57).

The release of a high profile film such as **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** was the end result of an intensive market research exercise carried out even before the film was scripted. This would have suggested the appropriate target audience for a film of this nature. This is added to informal information about target consumers not evident in consumer research, but known to designers as part of their own cultural knowledge, and to information about previous releases of films of a similar kind. As **Jib Fowles** tells us,

“Feedback data in the form of TV ratings, ticket grosses, and book and recording sales are scrutinised avidly when they arrive in the offices of the culture industries. This information on popularity gives the culture a general sense of the content that audience members currently find to their liking, and helps creators and receivers stay in line with each other.” (Fowles, 1996, p.110).

All this research helps a film to ‘*find its audience*’, as producers like to put it. (Turner, 1988,p.97).

Since the inception of cinema there has been a '*star system*' which has generally been associated with **Hollywood**. According to **Susan Hayward** 'it became evident that certain performers were greater attractions than others, and so performers were seen as having 'capital value'.' (Hayward, 1996, p.337). Nowadays producers put up money for a film if it includes a top star, correlating the amount with the status. Indeed, stars often turn a film finance around attracting financial backing that may not have been forthcoming otherwise. As part of **Disney's** advertising strategy, it stressed its star-studded cast of **Glenn Close, Jeff Daniel's, Joely Richardson, Joan Plowright** and **Hugh Laurie**. According to Trish Long, Disney particularly exploited the awareness of Glenn Close in an effort to justify the release of the movie. (interview 27th November, 1997) Also **Glenn Close** is well known for playing the villain. As **James Cameron-Wilson** explains:

"One of the world's best at being bad, she relished the chance to add the puppy-snatching fashion tycoon to her long list of movie and stage villainesses." (Flicks, December 1996, p.6).

According to the producer **Ricardo Mestres**,

*"We were looking for a world-class actress, bigger than life, someone who could bring grandeur to one of the most famous characters in all moviedom. **Glenn Close** was our first choice; she brings a life and energy to the role that could only be achieved by a great actress."* (Meath Chronicle, 21st December 1996).

Disney, being the highly successful company that it is, was able to employ all the best people to ensure that its first release of an animated film into a live-action version was a success. They had the efficient and well-known **Stephen Herek** as director, John Hughes as producer/screenwriter, the award-winning costume designer **Anthony Powell** and the veteran production designer **Asheton Gorton**. The special effects came from **Jim Henson's** workshops and the soundtrack was composed by **Michael Warren**, a world-famous composer and arranger. All these factors were stressed in the promotion of the film, suggesting it all the more worthwhile to go and see such a lavish production made on an obviously huge **budget** by a highly talented cast and crew.

One hundred and One Dalmatians was advertised through print, television and radio, with an unusual visual emphasis. It is itself a very strong visual movie, and as **Paul du Gay** points out, ours is predominantly a visual culture. (du Gay, 1997, p.19). Part of the advertising strategy included a very big **premiere** with plenty of promotions; for instance, they 'dalmatianised' a bus in Dublin and produced black and white jelly tots and chocolate bars, playing on the black and white Dalmatian theme. They also did some work with the anti-fur lobbies, because that is one of the messages of the film. They produced Dalmatian toys to encourage children to view the toys as playthings rather than the real thing. (Foster, 27th November, 1997). Also, the film premiere had a very strong fashion element to it and was held to raise funds for the children's charity, **Angels Quest**. (fig. 4). In addition, **Buena Vista** distributed '*in-cinema marketing*' leaflets to cinemas around the country suggesting ideas on how to promote the Dalmatian theme in their own areas.



Fig 4 Photocall to promote a special premiere of the film 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians to raise funds for the childrens charity 'Angels Quest'.

One Hundred and One Dalmatians was the big Christmas blockbuster of 1996. As one article described it, the film was *“unleashed this weekend in a blaze of publicity and the biggest promotional push in the company’s history”*. (City Tribune, 13th December 1996). (fig. 5).

Christmas is the time when cinemas and production companies direct all their attention to the desires of children as an audience.

“More advertising is displayed in December than in any other month; more popular culture - in the forms of recordings, video cassettes, works of fiction, video games, ticket sales - is purchased than in any other season, in fact more consumer goods of all sorts are bought than at any other time of year.” (Fowles, 1996, p.44)

Jib Fowles also maintained that advertisements at this time are *“excessive and hyperbolic”* (Fowles, 1996, p.250). This is the time of year, therefore, when the film industry is at its most **profitable**. Audiences, however, are unreliable, as the consumers who make up this audience are not generally speaking regular cinema-goers.

John Daly informs us in ‘cashing in on puppy love’, that

“Christmas time is that time when the major studios turn their vision further downwards in search of the ultra-lucrative kiddies movie market. At a time of year when the wants and desires of these pre-teeners are exploited by a myriad of clever marketing ploys. Hollywood has never been a slouch in understanding where its best interests lie.” (Daly, The Examiner, 10th December 1996).

A great deal of this movie was made in snow, which was a conscious decision by the producers, and helped with the Christmassy feel of the movie. As **Graeme Turner** tells us *“marketing has recognised that film is part of a multimedia complex.”* (Turner, 1988, p.2). The marketing of the film used fashion to a great extent, in particular the black and white Dalmatian print and fake fur, materials suited to that dressing-up time of year.



Rachael Kelly and Emma



Maebh Hanratty



Ellen and Anne Sherry



Niamh Dennis and Maebh Hanratty



Rosanna, Chris, Diane De Burgh,
Hannah Deacon, Jack Thompson,
Julian Corry , Michael and
Hubie De Burgh

Fig.5 Photographs of the 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' premiere in Dublin

The **media** is an important aspect of film advertising, indeed the media can be a determining factor in the success or failure of a film. A full ten months before the film was released, in February 1996, **Buena Vista** organised for all of the countries in the world to send their top key critics onto the set of the movie at **Sheperton**. This was the only time that this ever happened. In **Ireland**, critics like **Dave Fanning**, **Michael Dwyer**, **Michael Doherty** of the **RTE Guide**, and **Paul Byrne** of **The Evening Herald** were sent to visit the impressive set at the studios at **Sheperton**. **101 Dalmatians** big European premiere was held in **London** with **Joely Richardson** and **Glenn Close** participating in interviews. The premiere was at the **Royal Albert Hall** which had not had a movie shown there for 75 years. For the premiere a full Disney live-action performance was organised with dancing and singing routines. They ‘*dalmatianised*’ the **Albert Hall** for the occasion and had a huge fashion show in which famous designers produced designs taking the theme of **Cruella de Vil** or Dalmatians, which was covered extensively by the press. As **Trish Long** explains,

“With a big budget movie you can buy advertising and to some degree bypass the opinion of the media. There are a lot of movies that the media dislike but the public love. They may not be critical successes, but they would be popular successes. However, this was one that was both. It was both a critical success and a popular success with the audiences.” (Long interview, 27th November 1997)

The modern feature film and the primitive fairytale serve similar functions. The feature film, in this case **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** live-action version, is really just an up-to-date fairytale, that is moving with the times. Fairytales are there to enthrall.

“Because the teller struggles to locate and find an audience who will receive the stories message with favour, children emerge as hearers , established in printed literature as the special audience by the mid-eighteenth century; they are still in the lucrative market of mass entertainment that draws on fairytale material . Children are not likely to be committed to a certain way of thought ; they can be moulded, and the stories they hear will then become the ones they expect.”(Warner, 1994, pp.409-410)

This kind of film deepens the imagination of children by allowing them and adults also to believe in the fantastic for a short while. Indeed, according to **Petrie**, *“Fantasy helps to explain the fascination and so the power of cinema.”* (Petrie (ed), 1993, p.2). One of the fascinations of film for the viewer is the collapsing of the boundaries of the real. **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** is characterised by what **Marina Warner** has termed *“The disregard for logic”* (Warner, 1994, p.xvii). **Escapism** allows us to overlook the lack of realism in this type of film, where skunks, racoons and chipmunks run wild in the **Suffolk** countryside, where people as flamboyant and over-the-top as **Cruella**, or as silly as her henchmen , or where animals and birds as clever as those of the film, exist. **Escapism** is a form of release for adults and harmless fun for children, and it is in no way detrimental to their outlook on life, as their sense of separation from reality is highlighted when the film is over and they leave the cinema.

The uses of enchantment in the contemporary world of the leisure industry are vital to the success of such films as **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**. The film allows fantasy to work within reality, it has the ability to render the imaginary for the real, making it easier for children to believe in, enjoy and learn from. As **Marina Warner** reminds us, fairytales offer us a way of questioning, of looking at daily reality in an examined way. Fairytales are indeed still criticised, for the false hope they hold out, their lack of realism and simplification of situations. However in today's world where ecological catastrophes and radical changes in the world for the worse appear imminent, fairytales and fantasy seem like a mode of not only survival for one's mental health but also as a mode of understanding.

The film is certainly geared towards adults in that **Glenn Close** is an actress most adults, rather than children, recognise. Also some of the jokes are strictly for adults:

"What kind of a sycophant are you?" (**Cruella** to assistant)

"What kind of a sycophant would you like me to be?" (Assistant)

In true fairytale tradition **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** relies not only on the storyline and characters, but also on the idea that adults enjoy being children again. The film attracts a public that can include different generations and classes who will as **Marina Warner** says *"Loose themselves in the make-believe in a different way, united by the pleasures of enchantment"*.

Disney's vision has affected everybody's ideas of fairytales, themselves. In **Disney** films such as **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**, the contemporary perception of the fairytales has been influenced. In **Disney** tales, gruesome and sinister forces are magnified and prevail throughout, until the very last moment where right and goodness overcome them, and so, as with all **Disney** movies the audience leave the cinema happy.

Chapter 2: Disney as a Global Entertainment Corporation offering

Consumers a Total Cultural Package.

A great deal of **market research** is done before a film is advertised and promoted. As already suggested, market research usually begins before a film has even been scripted. It enables organisations to be highly responsive to the demands of its customers.

"..... 'staying close to the customer' is presented as a crucial form of enterprising conduct that every organisation must endeavour to learn in order to optimise both its own potential and that of the economy and society more generally. Representations of the customer act as devices for restructuring organisations in order to make them more clearly conform to the dictates of entrepreneurial rationality." (Du Gay, 1997, p311)

Also, **John Izod**, in **Hollywood** and the **Box Office** says,

"the marketing machine at its most effective should give the majors security. While not every film will turn huge profits, the opportunities to lay off costs and to explore a number of interlinked markets should have given the studios safeguards against heavy losses."
(Izod, 1988, p.187)

Film companies often produce merchandise to help promote their films; this means of marketing makes money for producers in its own right.

"Thus by reaching audiences through as many channels as possible, the majors seek to build their blockbusters into events of which most people would be unaware."
(Izod, 1988, p.185)

John Izod also tells us that **Nic Roeg** once asked “*Is it the fate of the successful Hollywood director to become a manufacturer of toys?.*” (Izod, 1988, p.185)

“As early as 1912, exporters became aware that the demand for American goods followed films into new territories, and cinema emerged as an effective means of persuading people to consume.” (Izod, 1988, p.63)

Society has become more commercialised since the animated version was first released in January 1961, (and then later released again in 1986). So the new live-action version has invested more in merchandising and therefore had a greater impact on its viewers in terms of its promotion. Because the film was released during the **Christmas** holiday period the merchandising of Dalmatian goods at this time was highly successful, as it is at this time of year that advertising reaches its peak of intensity and we are bombarded with commercialised images. This time around the film even had an impact on the fashion industry (a first for any children’s film), giving the fashion industry an excuse to use sumptuous materials and outrageous designs based on Dalmatian prints and **Cruella**-style clothes, all, of course, in fake fur which was an overriding theme in the film.

The advance material, in this case the ‘*spotted merchandise*’ helps to sell the film to the public even before it opens. The public are bombarded with Dalmatian-related images. The selling of these goods sends out the signal to consumers that this movie is going to be big, its the latest **Disney** success. Children begin to want to collect Dalmatian goods and soon every child has Dalmatian toys and accessories. Of course, most importantly then, children want to see this movie, that features their striped puppy in the live-action film. Thus we see that the merchandising of associated Dalmatian goods is complementary to the film. The company tries to time the consumer products so that they are ready for the release of the movie.

In such a craze as '*dalmatianmania*', the product shelf life is short. **Designers** thus attempted to articulate production and promote consumption. **Empire** magazine (January 1997, p.16) proclaimed '*101 promotions pooch pic provokes merchandising madness*'. In this article on '*Disney's latest doggy-based juggernaut*', it tells us that **One hundred and One Dalmatians** has over seventeen thousand items of spotty canine merchandising arising from the film. As well as the predictable range of cuddly toys, there were watches, walkmans, alarm clocks, soundtrack, back packs, duvet covers, pyjamas, lunch boxes and a full line of Dalmatian clothes. (fig. 6 & 7). Dalmatian puppy toys were intended to function as a substitute for the real thing. **Observer Life** declared that "*when Disney's new film opens in Britain this week the nation will go inexplicably dotty over all things spotty.*" and indeed they did. (Observer Life, 8th December 1996). The manufacturers of Dalmatian merchandise sought to create "*wants where they never previously existed in order to dispose of even larger quantities of goods.*" (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.270).

Dalmatian-inspired design also gave designers a chance to be really inventive and have fun with the theme, by constructing wacky clothes or even furniture. The effects of Dalmatian-inspired design on furniture prompted one journalist to write -

"The great British public finally appears to have lost its sartorial inhibitions and grown into the eccentricity with which, mysteriously, it has long been credited. We risk making even Cruella look tame." (Observer Life, 8th December 1996, p.34,). (fig. 8).

DALMATIAN BACK PACK

£19.99, The Disney Store
The kindest way to wear
one . . .



Fig.6 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' back pack

101 Promotions

Pooch pic provokes
merchandising
madness!

DISNEY'S LATEST DOGGY-BASED juggernaut, 101 Dalmatians, is more than well served by near 17,000 items of spotty canine merchandising. As well as the predictable range of cuddly, speckled puppy toys neatly released on to the market during the Christmas rush, celluloid doggy types can sink their canines into a themed chocolate snack (white chocolate with

Available: "Unfeasibly large Dalmatian Walkman (child not included)."



"brown" chocolate chips); keep track of the time on black and white daubed watches; bop down the street to the spotster's soundtrack on a bespeckled Walkman, and do all the above while toggled up in the full line of Dalmatians fashion gear. And there's no need for the pooch passion to end when night draws in, as with 101 Dalmatians duvet covers, pillow cases and pyjamas, the promotional madness can last all night long!

And then there are the brooches, pens, books, boots, knickers, alarm clocks, ear muffs, lunch-boxes, ceramic statuettes, roller-skates . . .



Fig.8 More 'One Hundred and One Dalmatian' accessories



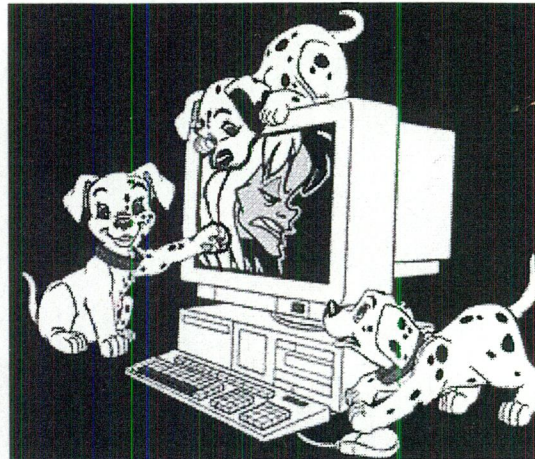
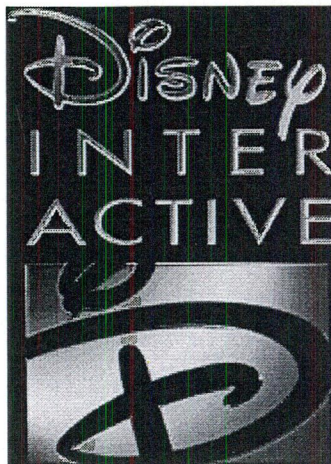
Fig.8 The effects of Dalmatian inspiration on design

Disney is a global entertainment corporation which combines cultural hardware, (a film) with cultural software, (toys, tee-shirts etc.) and so offers consumers a total cultural package. **Paul du Gay** tells us that *'teams of games designers began to regularly visit sets during film production to advise on what colours would be suitable for transferring to computer games.'* (du Gay, 1997, p.86).

Disney even has an interactive web site with 101 Dalmatians (http://www.disney.co.uk/disneyinteractive/101_interactive/home.html). (fig. 9). Their site which was set up by **Hewlett-Packard** is divided into a "goodie" and "baddie" set of items for children. On the villain side are lots of **Cruella** competitions and on the goodie side there are games. **Disney** also shows samples of 101 Dalmatian games, *'Disney's animated 101 Dalmatians storybook'*, **Hewlett-Packard** also had a printer with a Dalmatian dot matrix, which features both a print pack software and **Disney's** 101 Dalmatians print studio which are targeted specifically at the family market. The **software** is aimed at children and the menu is easy to follow with a little doggy character providing additional help. The print pack allows one to create cards, banners, magnets etc.,

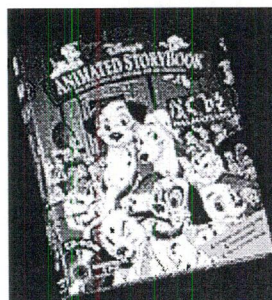
The family market that once sustained the film industry has now all but gone, and in its place is a predominantly youthful market. Now different films have diverse markets appropriate to different age groups. Those films that do, rarely, appeal to a broad audience tend to incorporate additional features, such as a fashion element, to draw those audiences. For example *"Clueless"*, starring **Alicia Silverstone**. *"The desire to watch a popular film is related to a whole range of other desires - for fashion; for the new; for the possessions of icons or signs."* (Turner, 1988, p.101). **Charles Ekwert** has mentioned in a different context, the *"emotional fantasy - generating substance of films."* (Belton, 1996, p.117). In general, audiences are unlikely to maintain a habit of going to the cinema regularly, regardless of the title showing. However, figures are on the increase.

"Our fascination with film is now thought to be not a fascination with particular characters and intrigues so much as a fascination with the image itself." (Turner, 1988, p.116).

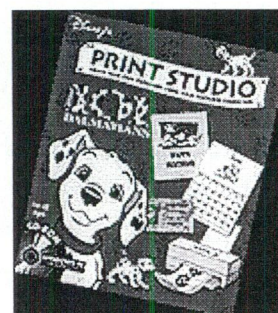


*Brings the magic of
Disney to your
Home Computer*

2 Great New CD-ROMS



Disney's Animated
Storybook



Disney's Print Studio

comments

Fig.9 Page from Disney's 'One Hundred and One Dalmatians' interactive web site

Film and the image it presents to us essentially provides us with pleasure. Enjoyment of the event itself and also in the pure enjoyment of seeing and of being a spectator outside the event that is the film. This is where our **fascination** lies with the image and our own personal consumption of that image.

Chapter 3: The Film and Consumers.

As already intimated in the articulation of production and consumption, Disney's strategy of combining the production of cultural hardware, with the production of cultural software, offers consumers a 'total cultural package'. (du Gay, 1997). Du Gay maintains that the process of packaging cultural consumption, however, is not quite as straightforward as producers anticipate, as the practices of consumers can be quite different to what the producer expects. Producers generally attempt to encode or give a particular meaning to their products. Consumers, however, do not passively receive and accept the meanings determined by the producers; instead they often encode the product themselves. Thus meanings are actively made in consumption. Products come to mean different things to those using them. Consumption indeed is becoming more of a personal act of production in its own right.

The consumption of film today is harder to define than hitherto. It often appears that audiences are at the mercy of the film entrepreneur who turn out the latest blockbusters in the easy assurance of inevitable success. Today however fortunes are lost making movies, the way in which one movie will catch the imagination of the audience, while another will not, is a mystery to the industry. Movies might be made by actors, directors, and producers, but they are ultimately made successful by audiences, notwithstanding *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*.

David Morley argues the importance of where a film is viewed as much as what the film actually is.

"Rather than selling individual films, cinema is best understood as having sold a habit or a certain type of socialised glamour, warmth and colour." (Morley, 1992, p.157)

For *101 Dalmatians*, people wanted to see it in the cinema because it was a 'big blockbuster' movie, and its full impact could only be experienced if it was seen on the big screen.

From the 1930s through to the late 1950s American intellectuals were concerned with the analysis of the 'industrialisation of culture'.... popular film was often used as the exemplary instance of mass culture in this work. From its earliest moments cinema was a producer of 'technology' and mechanical reproduction, and from an early stage, it was based on a system of industrial production and mass distribution. (Hollows and Janovich, 1995, p.16).

Culture industries such as Disney have standardised cultural produce. This kind of production, it has been agreed by theorists, will threaten the amount of cultural diversity in the world. For instance, Adams and Horkheimer argues about how culture had become standardised and robbed of any unique qualities. According to du Gay

"this resulted in a particular type of consumption in which new demands were made of the listener, viewer or reader. The mass culture that was being produced by the culture industry encouraged consumers to reject everything that was not familiar."

(du Gay, 1997, p.76).

In 'Doing Cultural Studies', Paul du Gay tells us that our desire to consume is a 'false' need created by advertisers and producers in an effort to have us consume more and diverse commodities. And so, we are told by Marx that consumption in its turn furthers production, by providing for the producers the individuals for whom they are producing. It is through consumption, du Gay argues, that we are urged to shape our lives by the use of our purchasing power. (du Gay, 1997).

Are the public being exploited by the film media and becoming passive consumers or are they getting as much out of what is being produced by producers, in terms of enjoyment, as producers are making money out of them? The film was promoted and publicised well in advance of its release, with Dalmatian merchandise released well in advance of the film. Because of the nature of Dalmatian merchandise, which is mainly that of toys etc., I think it helps to blur the line of the consumer as the exploited, as the consumer is in effect receiving something for their money. Certainly in terms of exploitation, Disney's exploitation of the children's market was well timed to coincide with Christmas, when gifts had to be purchased for children anyway. So, in a way, Disney just provided the goods for potential Christmas presents, perhaps making the parents job easier. Also, when your market is children, I think exploitation of the market is easier, as price, value for money etc., is not of importance in the minds of children, who only know what they want. In terms of the public in general being exploited by the film media and merchandising campaigns, the evidence says 'no', that the public can and do resist what is being offered to them by producers if they so choose. However, Adorno and Horkheimer analysed the impact of corporate control on production, and in effect they said that the ability of large corporations to dominate production would have a detrimental impact on creative activity, leading to a decline in 'aesthetic diversity' and so offering consumers 'very little choice'. (du Gay, 1997, p.102). In 1932, the sociologist, Henry Pratt Fairchild foresaw that the very concept of the individual was becoming obsolete. Certainly, in today's world of mass production, the choice of diverse and unique objects is limited.

Chapter 4: The Effects of the Film on the Fashion Industry:

The pace of the fashion cycle has quickened considerably over the years. Nowadays a fashion may have difficulty surviving even one season let alone a few. This is partly due to the faster transmission of information in the media. There are different speeds of change in the fashion world with crazes like ‘dalmatianmania’, being extremely short phases while styles and tastes tend to last a little longer. (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.222). Innovators of fashion are extremely important,

“....not merely for consuming the first batch of a new product thus importing information with a social system, but in communicating their decisions to others. Their example reinforced by their verbal endorsement and visual display, is crucial in generating the growing aggregate of social information about a new product.” (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.239).

People need to see others follow a fashion, read or hear about it before they take it up themselves.

Innovation usually begins in the upper or leisure class, where the first consumer innovators buy in comparatively exclusive upmarket shops. They are watched closely by manufacturers and retailers who cater for the lower **socio-economic** groups, the late adapters. If the upmarket innovators are enthusiastic then the retailers will frantically produce the overall style using cheaper materials and techniques. (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.221-236).

“Inevitably, such risks are far too great for the larger entrepreneurs in the fashion industries. They dare not lead. Instead they have to follow at a discreet (but not great) distance from the avant -garde.” (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.236).

Media influences from outside the system are important in the marketing of new ideas. Fashion journalism is useful for keeping us in touch with what is going on. Invariably, fashion at the top is extreme yet it still affects mainstream fashion. When fashion crazes such as ‘*dalmatianmania*’ became popular, consumers found the shops saturated in spotted articles.

Long after Dalmatian-inspired adult clothes have gone, children’s Dalmatians clothing and accessories are still on the market, as children’s fashion does not appear to change as quickly, and hence has a longer and more productive shelf-life. (fig. 10).

The fashion element of the film added another layer to the attractions of **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** as a film. Fashion in the film helped to reach out to those harder to reach groups like teenagers and young twenties age groups.

John Izod tells us that in **Hollywood** it was **de Mille** in his films who first established close links between the fashion and film industries,

“For Americans and the many throughout Europe who modelled their looks on what they saw in American movies, the centre of the fashion world shifted from Paris to Hollywood.” (Izod, 1988, p.66).



Fig.10 Childrens fashion at Debenhams

In **Taste Today**, we are told that, consumers of new fashion ideas like to know where they have originated. (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.241). In the case of **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**, the source of the inspiration for contemporary fashion is obvious. As **Blumer** explains, fashion is modern and so must keep up with developments, not only in its own field but other related fields in the arts, and wider social world. **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** for instance, provided the fashion industry not only with new inspiration but also new fabrics to use. As **Trish Long** explains, the fashion industry had to be clued-in much earlier on about the film, as fashion seasons and what is likely to be released is pinned down a few seasons, or even a year in advance. **Disney** in the **United States** would have made it known to the big fashion houses that **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** was going to be made and released at **Christmas** in many English speaking territories, and a few months later at **Easter** in other territories. (interview, Buena Vista, 27.11.97)

Addressing them to the more daring and flamboyant consumer The **Haute Couture** industry took advantage of the outrageous **Cruella** and the Dalmatians for inspiration. It gave the fashion industry a chance to go gloriously over the top. The kind of fashion worn by **Cruella** has been described by **Jonathan Romney** as “*high-fashion camp, that half funny face, half absolutely fabulous.*” (fig. 11). (Sight and Sound, January 1997, p.42) As **Paul Du Gay** explains, what is striking about fashion is the way it has the capacity to excite people and the way it offers them the means to express or transform themselves. (Du Gay, 1997, p.126). Designers inspired by **Cruella** tried to encapsulate that “*Classic bad woman beauty*”. (Petrie,1993, p.82). We have been told in **Taste Today** that the commercial rewards for giving products the colours that current consumers find attractive is enormous. (Lloyd Jones, 1991, p.243). In this case fashion followed the colours found in furs, in particular black and whites, which as it happened were complementary to the Christmas season.



Fig.11 Cruella inspired outfit by Vivienne Westwood, Katherine Hamnett, Eric Halley and Philip Treacy

As part of **Disney's** promotional campaign top designers were invited to create a special outfit inspired by the film, for which they held a fashion show in London in the Royal Albert Hall. Various magazines also carried articles on fashion inspired by the film. The Sunday Times had a fashion spread entitled, "*Doggy fashion, clothes that bring out the De Vil in you*" where **Michelle Langley** had a sneak preview of designers **Neil Cunningham, Katherine Hamnett, Alexander McQueen** and **C. Blundell**. (fig. 12). (The Sunday Times, 8th December 1996, p.16). There was also an article in **YES** magazine with the heading, "*Fun Fur All, fashion with the feel good factor.*" The Observer Life magazine also did a fashion spread entitled "*Even nice girls fake it*", with designs by **Katherine Hamnett, Dolce and Gabanna, Vivienne Westwood** and hats by **Stephen Jones** and **Philip Treacy**. (The Observer Life, 8th December 1996). In the same magazine was another article entitled "*Cruella but kind, look sharp in fake fur.*" (fig. 13). All these articles helped a great deal in promoting the fashion element of the film.

Of course the other strong fashion element was that in this version both **Cruella** and **Anita** work in the fashion house of **De Vil**. In retrospect, the fashion industry's input was very complementary to the film. In the actual film, fashion is made into a topic of conversation.

Cruella: *Now Darling, tell me more about those spots. I did leopard spots in the eighties.*

ANITA: *Well Dalmatian spots are a little different aren't they?*

Cruella: *Cosy*

Anita: *Cuddly*

Cruella: *Classic*

Anita: *Less trashy*

Cruella: *Exactly*

DECEMBER 1996

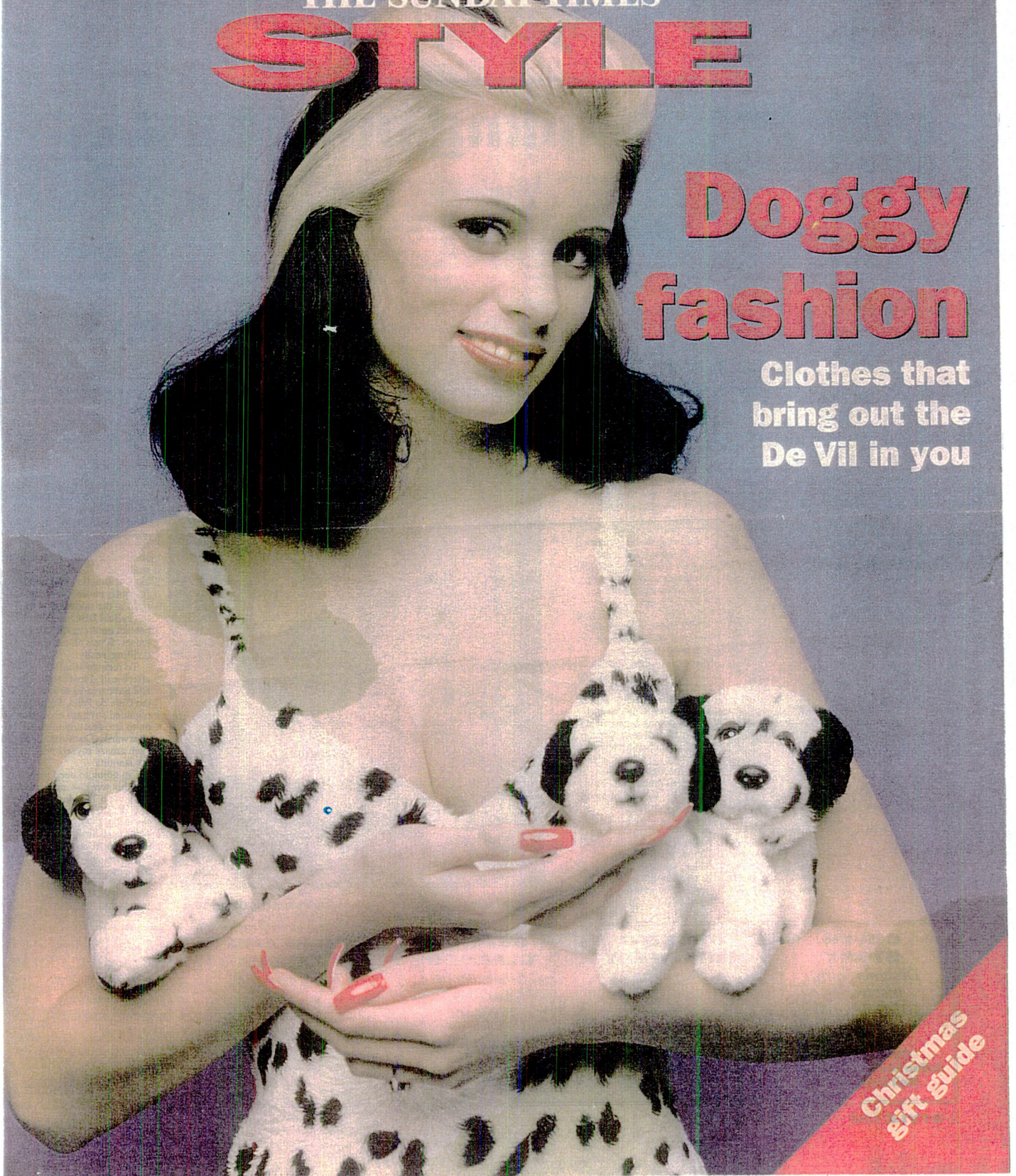


Section 9

THE SUNDAYTIMES **STYLE**

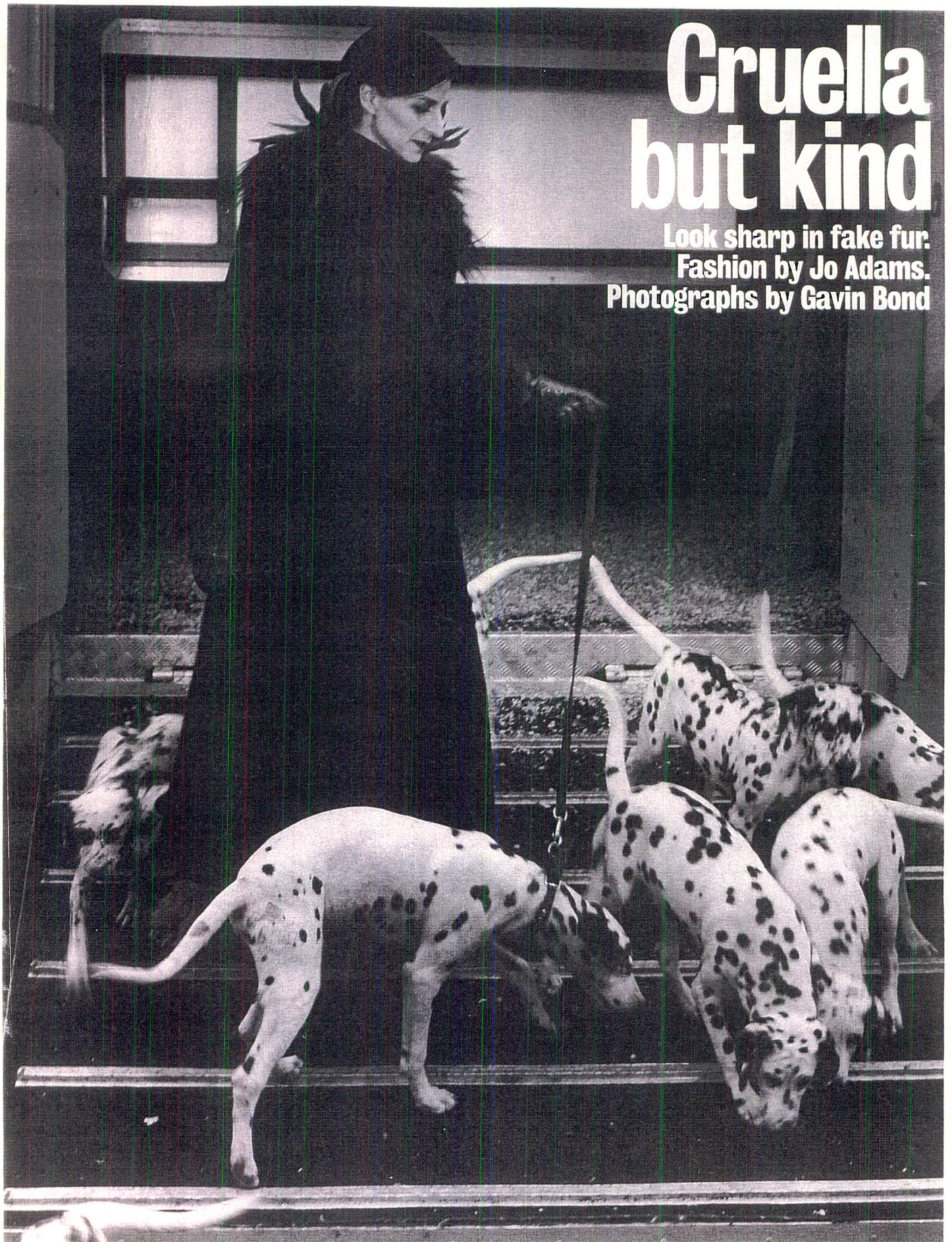
Doggy fashion

Clothes that
bring out the
De Vil in you



**Christmas
gift guide**

Fig.12 More fashion inspired by the film



Cruella but kind

Look sharp in fake fur.
Fashion by Jo Adams.
Photographs by Gavin Bond

8 DECEMBER 1996 OBSERVER LIFE 25

Fig.13 Cruella inspired fashion

The eight costumes for **Cruella De Vil** are works of art. Each outfit has an animal motif, such as fur, feathers, or snakeskin. Three-time Academy-winning costume designer Anthony Powell explains the design process.

“I started with her silhouette. She’s such a spiky and forceful person that I wanted her silhouette to be striking and exaggerated ... in at the waist, out at the hips, with shoulders you could impale somebody on ... She wears gloves with fingernails which both extends the length of her fingers and makes her hand seem like claws.” (Sight and Sound, January 1997, p.42) (fig. 14).

Glenn Close has said that **Anthony Powell** has a great sense of couture and style, but also a good sense of humour which is vital for **Cruella**. Her hair was based on the original cartoon design of two-toned tresses. Because Powell’s costumes were so structured, **Cruella’s** hairstyle is what reflected her manic personality.



Fig.14 The extravagantly costumed Cruella De Vil

The overriding theme of the film is animal protection as narrated through the plight of the innocent puppies. This theme is translated by the fashion industry into fake animal friendly fur. (fig. 15). Throughout the film Cruella is clad in floor-length leopard, zebra and tiger skins and she craves a Dalmatian ensemble to add to her wardrobe. The environmentally positive message of the film, was successfully carried over to fashion.

"Shopping today, is like going on safari; from leopard-spotted lingerie to zebra-striped lampshades high-street trophy hunters can't get enough of the stuff. But no leopards have lost their spots, no zebras have been stripped of their stripes; the current fashions being devoured by shoppers are good clean fun fur. Faking is the only way." (Observer life, 8th December, p.32). In this way the film is aimed at adults as it repeatedly stressed the importance of being environmentally correct.

Anita: *We could do this in linen.*

Cruella: *It would be stunning in fur.*

Anita: *But you'll be wearing it to the Chesterton trials, that's in April, fur would be inappropriate.*

Cruella: *But it's my only true love Darling, I live for fur, I worship fur.*

Our clothes say a lot about us, and our place in society. Glenn Close who starred as Cruella is an animal lover and wore fake fur for all her scenes. The fashion inspired by the film was aimed mainly at women and extroverts, and in the beginning at least the true elite fashion followers. In one article we were told that you don't have to be wicked to look good, and that fake fur adds the feel-good factor to the glamour of looking bad. (Observer life, 8th December 1996, p.32) According to Dodie Smith's (author of One Hundred and One Dalmatians) biographer, Valerie Grove, Dodie loved mink, and was a wickedly good dresser, and got her first Dalmatian to complement her fashionably monochrome flat.

For ALL the family

Yes!

MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 1, 1996



FUN FUR ALL!

FASHION
WITH THE
FEEL-GOOD
FACTOR

Fig.15 Fashion with 'Fun fur' inspired by the film

It was in the 1990s that fake fur made a comeback as a convincing alternative to the real thing.

The brutally effective anti-fur campaigns by **lynx**, won over many people to fake fur. Furs revival for **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** made more of a fun statement, because you could wear it to the office or a night-club. (fig. 16).

Fashion often proves unpredictable, although sometimes we can anticipate the change. For instance every year fake fur returns with perhaps a small variation in surface texture or design. As we've seen fashion cycles get shorter and shorter, some fashions don't even seem to be out long enough to be completely out. As fashion and fads expire quickly the message was to accessorise. Also in fashion, social risks are usually greater than financial ones.

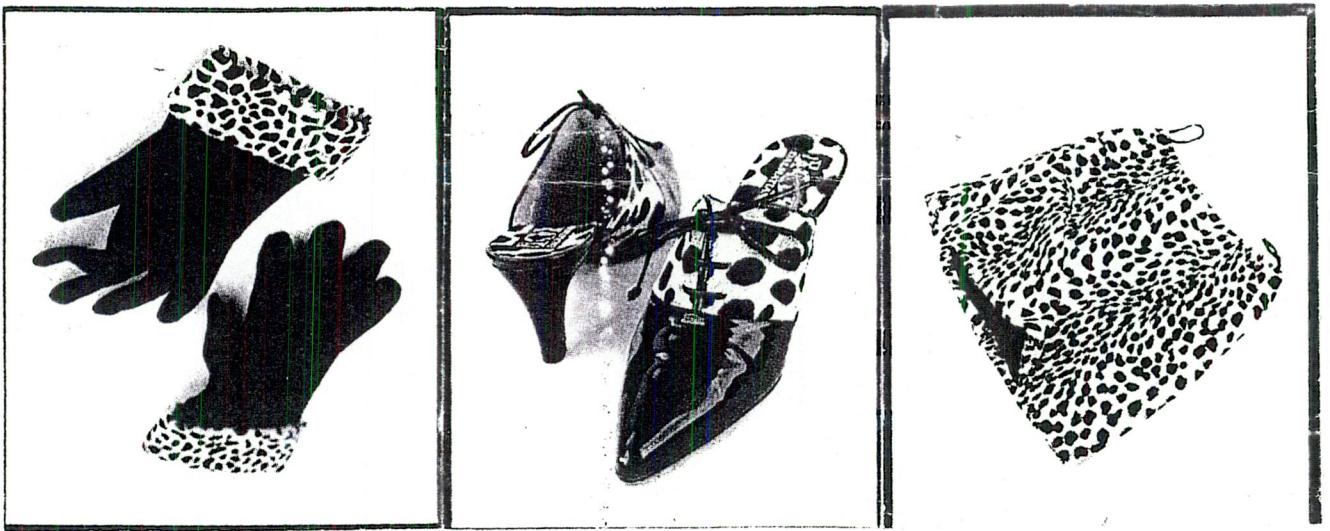


Fig.16 Fashion with a fun feel inspired by Dalmatians

Chapter 5: The Power of Disney and the Effects of the Film on Dogs.

When a firm such as **Disney** owns its own film production studios, distribution networks and cinemas, along with video production companies, distribution outlets and television channels, it is said to be vertically integrated. Being vertically integrated has reduced costs, such as the money **Disney** would have had to pay to distributors and retailers. In this way **Disney** can **monopolise** all stages of the production and distribution process, and so gain advantages over its competitors. John Izod tells us that in the early 1950s, **Walt Disney** merged with capital cities **ABC** to create what was then the world's largest media conglomerate. He also said that **Disney** refused to fund or distribute the films of independents and sought to keep things that way. (Izod, 1988, p.163-165) **Disney** is a good example of how successful the film industry's invasion of television can be. A journalist with the **Financial Times** echoed the anxieties of Adorno and Horkheimer on the ability of the company to dominate cultural production and distribution on a global scale.

"The union of America's most famous studio and most powerful television network is seen in wall street terms as a win-win situation. What is good for investors, however need not be good for the wider world. A win-win situation is like a free lunch; someone has to pay in the end. In this case it could turn out to be the consumer." (Du Gay, 1997, p.80)

Disney as a global cultural corporation produces goods for the global economy. A global economy is

"....an economy that works as a unit in real time on a planetary scale. It is an economy where capital flows, labour markets, commodity markets, information, new materials, management and organisation are internationalised and fully interdependent throughout the planet...."

(Du Gay, 1997, p.24)

As **Paul Du Gay** summarises 'people within the global economy become globally aware and acquire global tastes and in so doing become global consumers.' (du Gay, 1997, p.29).

The **Disney** company informed shareholders in its 1994 annual report, that

“.....despite differences in national tastes, most American hits become hits everywhere

.....Disney books, merchandise are hits in every corner of the world.” (du Gay, 1997, p.81)

As **Adorno** and **Horkheimer** have already argued the concentration of culture production in a capitalist industry results in a standardised commercial commodity. (Du Gay, 1997, p.73) The **Disney** company has become a household name by producing the standardised commercial commodity. In their essay on “*The culture Industry: enlightenment as mass deception*,” **Adorno** and **Horkheimer** also point out that

“Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce.” (Du Gay, 1997, p.105)

Buena Vista enabled **Disney** to reduce costs substantially less than twenty-five per cent, according to one estimate. (Izod, 1988, p.162). **Buena Vista** also enabled **Disney** to gain access to the right cinemas in sufficient numbers and at the right time. This has been one of the keys to **Disney's** success. Usually, the large national distribution firms cater to the commercial cinemas, sometimes having standing contracts with theatre chains in given areas. It is the major film companies like **Disney** that have the international sales force necessary to place films regularly and profitably. The industry concentrates on the big blockbusters like **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**, which has high production values and big stars, this makes it harder for the more modest films to gain publicity or even distribution. As I have already mentioned, people are generally attracted as spectators to the big blockbuster movies made on a huge budget. Independent films on the other hand attract a different kind of audience, an audience that is looking for something different in a film.

Robert Altman, an independent filmmaker, explains

“You couldn’t get me out of the house to see an American film; the artists have left it and its being run by bookkeepers and insurance people, and all their concerned with is the lowest common denominator, so they can sell the most tickets.” (Turner, 1988, p.5)

As already mentioned, seasonal factors, as well as the content of the film and how it is produced affect its success. When **Disney** first announced a live-action remake of their classic animation feature many critics saw this as just another moneymaking scheme and accused **Disney** of “beaming up past glories” and “strip-mining its past for profit”. According to one commentator,

“Being the solipsistic, self-reverential beast that it is, Hollywood seems destined never to cease re-heating soufflés that bear testament to past glories.” (Modern Woman, January 1997)

Johnathan Romney also pointed out that **Rodger’s** computer game is based on the original Dalmatians cartoon. (Sight & Sound, January 1997). Another example of **Disney** reusing old material.

Ian Cameron in ‘Movie’ emphasises the risk involved in making any kind of a movie in

Hollywood.

“Hollywood films are not so much custom-built as manufactured. The responsibility for them is shared, and the final quality is no more the fault of the director than of such parties as the producer, the set designer, the cameraman or the hairdresser. Only by a happy accident can anything good escape from this industrial complex.” (Hollows and Janovich, 1995, p.42)

On the other hand, it could be seen as **Disney** giving themselves a challenge, as it was a daunting and formidable task, remaking one of the most successful and well-loved classic animation’s.

As Ciaran Carthy argues , although

“Refilming it as a live-action family comedy is a kind of violation of the collective memory.

It could of course be argued that it’s geared to a whole new generation of children who can’t

have seen the 1961 classic.” (The Sunday Tribune, 8th December 1996, p.9). As the

earlier animated version was demonstrably so popular, this was a positive indication of the film’s possible success as a live-action version.

As Ciaran Carthy pointed out *‘the camera loves dogs ,even more than children, you only have to look at the phenomenal success of a line of otherwise unexceptional movies like Beethoven and Lassie.’*

(The Sunday Tribune, 8th December 1996, p.9).

In the actual filming of **One Hundred and One Dalmatians**, many people were surprised to hear

that 289 Dalmatians were used. As with all Disney productions using live animals the animals

were well looked after. On their internet site called ‘*One Hundred and One Dalmatians* ‘ Disney

tells viewers about the welfare of the animals on the set; how well they were looked after, with

‘deluxe purpose-built kennels ,toys, exercise runs, heating, around the clock vets and personal

trainers’. Producer, Ricardo Mestres said *“The puppies couldn’t have been better looked after.*

Our animals were treated better than most humans”. (<http://www.disney.com/101/allthosepuppies/-answer.3.html>). This net site also provides information on how the animals were trained using lots

of dog treats and gentle persuasion. It also tells how everything was disinfected for them, and how

filming was made safe for them with all the sets being made with the puppies safety in mind. John

Freed from the American Humane Association oversaw all animal activity. Filming was done

around the puppies. Writer /Producer John Hughes said ,

“I made a rule. I wouldn’t have the animals do anything that we’d have to manipulate

physically and that includes talking. We accomplished our goals using natural

behaviour. (<http://www.disney.com/101/allthosepuppies/-answer.9.html>)

Jim Henson's 'The creature shop' and 'Industrial light and magic' who specialise in computer generated images and special effects were called in when a task was too difficult or dangerous for the animals. It is also worth noting that the other dogs in the film that were not Dalmatians were rescued from animal rescue homes around the country and, after the filming of **One Hundred and One Dalmatians** they were homed. So in effect the making of the film managed to save some lives.

Veterinarian **Pete Welderburn** in one newspaper article reported that following the release of the original **101 Dalmatians** cartoon, a Dalmatian rescue service had to be formed in the 1960s to deal with unwanted Dalmatians. Throughout reviews of the live-action film many critics warned against the purchase of live Dalmatians for Christmas. The power of the **cinema** is often so strong that the audience may believe, for a while at least, that what they see on the **screen** is true. The anxiety was that power of suggestion may be such that people may develop higher expectations of dogs, in keeping with the film, than is realistic. The film was released before Christmas, a time renowned for the purchase of, and abandonment of dogs. The media had to be vigilant in its reminders that "*A dog is not just for Christmas, but for life.*", "*101 reasons not to get one.*" (Evening Herald, 27th December 1996), and "*Don't be a Christmas Cruella.*" (Galway City Tribune, 27th December 1996), are three such examples of articles which suggested getting a cuddly toy instead of a real dog, as they are a lot less expensive and a lot less hassle. Before the film was even released in **Ireland**, however, **The Star** (4th December 1996) reported that **American** kennel clubs were already reporting that thousands of Dalmatians were being dumped. **The Sunday World** (14th September 1997) reported that only nine months after the film was released, American Dalmatian shelters were reporting a stream of abandoned dogs. The **National Canine Defence League** had several concerns about the film which they communicated to **Disney** at the planning stage. Disney made a positive contribution by running a special version of the National Canine League's message, which was run before each screening.

The **British Dalmatian Society**, however, were bitterly opposed to the use of live puppies on the production. Their argument was that the remake would create a vast market for Dalmatian puppies which would later be abandoned. There was a documentary tracing the making of **Disney's** film through to the objections made by members of the **British Dalmatian Club**. Animal rescue workers feared a flood of Dalmatian puppies after Christmas.

It appears that the public did indeed ignore the media's messages not to be a "*Christmas Cruella*" and go out and buy a Dalmatian puppy on a whim. In **The Star** newspaper we were told that in America kennel clubs reported that thousands of Dalmatians were being dumped. In another article in **The Sunday World** newspaper, only nine months after the film's release, America reported a stream of abandoned dogs, although it did not state a particular breed.

Conclusions:

As established, **Disney** is a global-cultural corporation that feeds off itself to maintain its different divisions, so that they can maximise profit. The live-action version of **One Hundred and One Dalmations** is a good example of **Disney** feeding off itself, by remaking a film to which they already owned the rights and realising that they could do this with other films from their archive of animated classics. In addition by making a live-action version of an animated classic (a film medium normally aimed at the children's market), they broadened the appeal of the film to the older audience, using elements to attract them, such as fashion and a cast of famous stars. Notwithstanding, the amount spent on the promotion and advertising for **One Hundred and One Dalmations** is no guarantee of success; one can buy advertising, but not the opinion of the media. **One hundred and One Dalmatians**, however, did prove to be both a critical as well as a **commercial** success.

In today's world of film production, where costs and standards are so high, merchandising is almost necessary and children's films provide the perfect opportunities for the operation of these merchandising schemes. In the case of **101 Dalmatians** **Disney** chose an appropriate time for the release of a children's film; at Thanksgiving in the **U.S.A.** and Christmas in **Europe**, thus maximising box office and merchandising opportunities.

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