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Hooray for Hoolywoof...

Dogs in film

Dogs have always been popular in movies and the newly released *Dog Days* is a perfect example of why: it's a feel-good flick that will have dog lovers begging for more, writes BEVERLEY CUDDY

Picturehouse Central in London is a very glitzy new cinema, which, every few weeks, very kindly lets dogs in for free!

This August they rolled out the red carpet for the first viewing of a new romcom called *Dog Days* – you may have noticed the advert on the back page of last month's mag. Many of the most famous dogs of Instagram filled the seats and when the lights went down, everyone was glued to the screen.

Yes, that is cover dog Miss Darcy (facing page). She and all her Cockapoo friends had a whole row to themselves! There was a slight popcorn spillage in the Pug aisle, but by the end of the movie, I reckon the floor didn't need a vacuum!

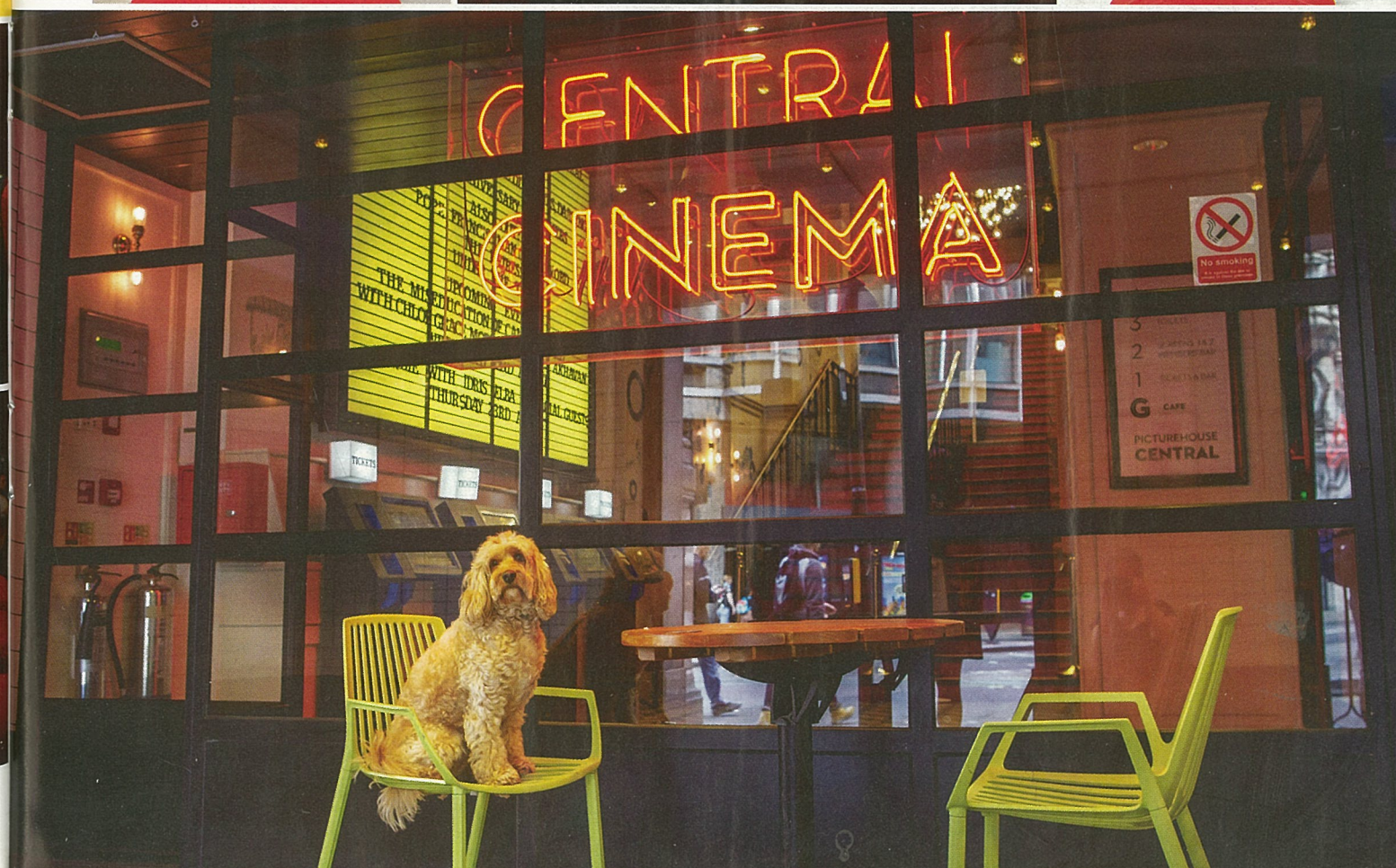
Dog Days was obviously written by proper dog lovers, as the acting roles for the leading dogs were very meaty. There's a rescue

Chihuahua that has a soft spot so needs to wear a helmet, a Goldendoodle with separation anxiety, and a rescue Pug that's very out of shape. The dogs bring everyone together in a very satisfying way, so mascara is not advised, as everyone said their eyes shed happy tears.



When asked what inspired this movie, it seems it was an article in *Psychology Today*, which concluded that people who have a dog in their life are likely to bring "more energy and vitality to their romantic relationships". The study stated: "There's an old saying that observing how a potential partner interacts with their pets tells a lot about how they'll behave in a long-term relationship."

In *Dog Days*, an eclectic group of characters deal with their careers, friendships, family dilemmas and dating adventures, and their lives are reflected in – and intertwined with – the lives of their dogs.



Cock-a-hoop for the Cockapoo

Superfan!

When MAY PING WONG wanted an intelligent city dog who would happily join in with every aspect of her adventurous life, she found exactly what she was looking for in the Cockapoo...

Do you love your dog?
Most people who read *Dogs Monthly* would happily admit that they do! Some people, though, go a bit further. It's not just their dog that they love – but the particular breed of dog. If you're a superfan, or you would like to nominate one, contact us (see page 3 for details).



“A what? Cocker Poodle? Never heard of them before.” The lady I’d just met was extolling the breed’s attributes. “They don’t moult, they don’t yap, they are intelligent and they are a good size for a city dog.” I didn’t know I had a list of criteria to tick off, but she gave me one – all the reasons why

this crossbreed of a Poodle and a Cocker Spaniel was the best choice for a London dog. This conversation happened as I had been contemplating getting a dog – for not the usual reasons. I am very much a city girl, who has lived in several capital cities, but I was at that time infatuated with a gentleman farmer, with whom I had nothing in common. It must

have been the idea of living in the countryside with landed gentry that seemed romantic. But after almost a year of trying to ignite a passionate romance, I finally realised the one thing that might give us something in common would be a dog. The farmer loved dogs and had a black Labrador (of course). I, on the other hand, had never had a

dog, although I had always wanted one as a child. Having worked long hours in the corporate environment and plane-hopping most of the time, my life had no place for a pet, or any other human being for that matter.

I had returned to London a few months previously to start a new chapter and my new endeavour meant working from home. So, it seemed the right time to have a pet and, in turn, hopefully a partner. Therefore, seeking Gentleman Farmer’s counsel on choice of breed was essential.

DOWN ON THE FARM

On one of my visits to his farm, we went for a walk across his vast fields with his dog. It was a beautiful April day and the pub where we stopped for lunch was packed. We sat outside, taking in the sun, and watched two little girls playing with their black puppy. We started a conversation with the well-attired ‘not from the area’ owner and learnt that she was from London. Gentleman Farmer immediately pointed out that I could use her help to decide on a suitable dog.

“A Cockapoo,” she insisted. “You must have one of those. They are the perfect London dog.”

She provided the name of her breeder whom she highly recommended and I found her online. Perusing the website, I found puppies listed under ‘American Cockers’ and ‘English Cockers’. What’s the difference, I wondered? I scrolled through and

saw there were so many colours to choose from. I finally came across a page with three puppies from a litter. They were English Cocker-Miniature Poodle crosses – all apricots – called Billy, Milo and Lulu. They looked so cute and a perfect colour. I wanted a boy named Mr Darcy, as I was determined that I would have a ‘Darcy’ in my life somehow. Who said he couldn’t be four-legged?

But the farmer thought otherwise.

“Don’t tell me you’re getting a dog because of a name.”

Of course, I didn’t let on that my getting a dog had other ulterior motives. I spoke to the breeder and discussed the traits of boy and girl dogs. One of the concerns I had was size, and the boys tended to be bigger, I was told, and considering that I was getting this dog for the purpose of pleasing the farmer, I had better go with the girl. With that, I secured Lulu with a deposit and decided she would still be called Darcy – well, in this case, she would be Miss Darcy.

Six weeks later, a little apricot Cockapoo puppy scampered into my flat and curiously ran from room to room, checking out the new environment and dutifully peeing on the silk rug in the living room. I was so shocked, I laughed nervously. What do I do now? The dog trainer who was present mopped up the round patch of pee with a roll of kitchen towel.

When that little puppy entered my life, I didn’t even know how



COCKAPOO PUPPIES. PHOTO BY TIM ROSE (WWW.TIMROSEPHOTOGRAPHY.CO.UK)

Superfan fact file



Breed group:	Crossbreed
Size:	Small to medium
Exercise:	A good walk/run – two hours per day is ideal
Length of coat:	Medium, needs grooming every five to six weeks
Lifespan:	Cockapoos have been known to live until their mid-teens
Health concerns:	Due to crossbreeding, Cockapoos can be in excellent health, or they may inherit some breed traits from the Poodle or Cocker Spaniel. Watch out for luxating patella (a problem of the knee joint) and eye disorders, such as progressive retinal atrophy.



Join other Cockapoo superfans...

- **Cockapoo Owners Club**
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- **Official Cockapoo Owner's Club UK**
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- **I Love My Cockapoo**
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Follow Miss Darcy...

Follow the adventures of Miss Darcy on her blog at www.missdarcy.org



to hold her leash. In fact, I made sure she was contained. I kept her at bay – behind baby gates in the kitchen in case she should have an accident or chew anything.

My life had changed overnight. I now had a living thing in my pristine London flat – one that totally depended on me for her meals, her well-being and her toileting. Reality had hit home. I could no longer have lie-ins and be footloose and fancy free.

The first thing I did when I got up was worry if she had peed. I had to feed her before I showered, and I forgot about breakfast so I could rush out of the flat before an accident occurred. If I hesitated, she peed on the stairs! I couldn't buy enough kitchen rolls to mop up the various accidents. I was at my wit's end on what to do. I had lost control of my life.

OUT OF CONTROL

I was also having separation anxiety – I couldn't leave her at home for fear that she would bark and if the neighbours complained, we could be in trouble. There was no place for a crate in the flat, so I bought a baby gate to keep her in the kitchen. There was nothing much there she could destroy.

But before long, she figured out how to open the latch on the gate. When I tied the gate shut, I still found an over-excited wagging tail puppy by the door, because by then she had grown big enough to

As we go about our adventures of discovering more dog-friendly places – travelling to new places both in the UK and abroad – we decided to share our experiences and spread the word that dog owners do not have to leave their dogs at home



jump over the gate. I would run around the flat, checking for any damage or accidents, but there was never any.

However, I still didn't trust her and I was ready to call it quits. Thoughts of rehoming her crept into my consciousness, but I feared what my friends would think of me. After all, they did warn me about the responsibility of a puppy and I had wanted to prove them wrong.

I had a trip planned long before she came and while in the past I never gave two thoughts about closing the door behind me, this time I needed to find somewhere for her to go.

Two months after Darcy entered my world, I left for New York. I was in need of a break from daily puppy responsibilities. I boarded her with a dog trainer who had helped me at the beginning – and thought this would be good for further training. I had also told myself that I would make a decision about keeping Darcy on my return.

But to my surprise, I found myself thinking about her every

waking hour while I was in New York – and counted the days until I was home. My heart pounded with excitement as I arrived at the gate of the mansion block where we live, and as I walked into the courtyard, I saw a dog larger than I remembered. She had grown and there was a woman standing next to her, who I'd never met, holding her bed and her leash. Who was she?

HERE TO STAY

I thought I had left her with the dog trainer, but she had been farmed out. I was furious! And when I looked at Darcy's eyes and saw the gunk in them, I almost snatched the leash from the woman's hand, took her bed, abruptly bid her goodbye and went into our home.

Well, you know the rest of the story. She stayed. And as for Gentleman Farmer, he is long gone. When we finally made the introductions, he couldn't deal with the excitement of a puppy and had smacked her with his large farmer's hands when she peed on his wool rug. With that strike, I saw the man that he



really was and my heart cried in pain as Darcy yelped. That pretty much left me to my own devices – just me and my dog, and I was determined to make it work.

On our walks in the park, it was fascinating to watch whenever Miss Darcy spotted another Cockapoo. The dogs would start to chase each other and would do the 'doodle dash'. They would keep chasing and playing like that until we stopped them. It was noticing this trait that made me long to meet other Cockapoo owners so Darcy could have play dates. I loved seeing her happy and running freely and I soon learned that other Cockapoo owners thought the same – and that was how the Hyde Park Cockapoo Friends group was started back in January 2013.

Instead of letting the separation anxiety control my life, I decided to find all the dog-friendly places I could take her to. It started with a local restaurant. I peeked my head inside and asked if Darcy could come in. They waved me in and that was the beginning of our adventures together. I started to ask every place that I would dine at if they were dog-friendly and our list grew long and varied – and there were so many options that I hardly ever needed to leave her at home.

She wasn't going to curb my love for travel, either! As soon as I found ways to cross the Channel, we were off exploring Europe together. I began revisiting places to create new memories with



Superfan fact

Celeb Cockapoo owners include actor Ashley Judd, best-selling author Lynda La Plante and singer Lady Gaga.

her and it evolved into a constant challenge to find new destinations for us to visit. We travelled far and wide, and when I needed to return to New York to close a chapter, I wanted Darcy with me. When I left the home I once had in New York City, I was glad she was by my side. We sailed back to England on the Queen Mary 2 – to new beginnings.

As we go about our adventures of discovering more dog-friendly places – travelling to new places both in the UK and abroad – we decided to share our experiences and spread the word that dog owners do not have to leave their dogs at home. And that's why we started writing a blog – Miss Darcy's Adventures (www.missdarcy.org) – to encourage others to enjoy the company of their dog in as many different circumstances.

By the time Miss Darcy turned two, she was no longer the crazy, over-excited puppy. She still loves her runs in the park, chasing squirrels, and gets excited about meeting up with friends. From the Hyde Park meets and through our blog, our circle of friends has grown tremendously. We have

met blog readers from as far away as Australia.

These days Miss Darcy sleeps on my bed and I want her lying next to me on the sofa when I am watching telly. I wouldn't have it any other way – and neither would she! I still wake up each morning thinking of her needs, but she has also adapted to mine.

She amazes me at how intuitive she is. Whenever we are in a situation where dogs are just tolerated, she behaves in an impeccable manner – walking to heel without my asking and sliding herself under the seat to 'disappear' from view. She complies with whatever I need her to do and she's picked up things I never even thought to teach her. When she wasn't feeling well in the night, she took herself to the bathroom and did what she needed to do in the bathtub – and stayed there until I found her the next morning. She makes me so proud of her at these times.

She has given me a chance to learn responsibility and, through her, I found that I was capable of loving a lot more than I ever imagined. I wanted to protect her with every sinew of me, and in return I received undeniable loyalty and love that was incomprehensible – how can another creature love me so much?

TURNING HEADS

As a Cockapoo owner, I have had only positive experiences and reactions. When Miss Darcy was a fluffball puppy, we couldn't walk down the street without someone stopping to ask me her breed. Eight years ago, Cockapoos were relatively new on the scene. Today they are at every turn.

From my own positive experiences and all the other Cockapoo friends that we have met over the last eight years, we have become great fans of the breed and it baffles us why so many press articles single them out as 'naughty' dogs – cute but uncontrollable. Aren't all puppies the same? They are mischievous, curious and full of energy and it is down to the owners to take the time to help them through physical exercise or mental challenges. Dogs are usually as good as their owners train them to be. 🐾