How Dogs Representation in Cinema Reflects How They are Seen in the Real World

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How Dogs Representation in Cinema Reflects How They are Seen in the Real World

By: Arden Fayard
Dogs were introduced very early into the movie industry, just as they were to every other aspect of our lives. Over the decades, the way we used and represented dogs in movies changed. This research stems from an interest in seeing if representation of dogs in movies changed in response to their roles in people’s lives.
Introduction

The first films to include dogs showed them as working dogs or the hero/rescuer of the story, such as Rin-Tin-Tin and Lassie. Later, dogs started to expand into the cartoon world where they were depicted in ways that emphasized their cuteness or adorability while also emphasizing the relationship between humans and dogs more. This is seen in *101 Dalmations* and *All Dogs Go to Heaven*. Dogs then became actors that could play comedic or dramatic roles, which is shown in *Beethoven* and the *Air Bud* series. Currently, dogs play a central part in the lives of many humans and, like humans, they are subjects of psychological analysis. Contemporary films like *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, and *A Dog’s Purpose* show dogs in this new way.
I decided to do this research because I have always loved both dogs and movies. The more of these movies that I watched the more I realized that the way dogs are shown shifted and changed depending on what year they were made.
Methods

Since this is not the kind of project that necessarily requires in person tests and studies, my methods were started with reading research done by other people on the topic to help back up and form some of my own ideas and opinions. I then did my own research on different dog movies and forming my own opinions about how the dogs are represented in said movies.
My conclusions are that I was at least semi-correct in how dogs were represented over the years. I came to this conclusion after researching different movies and forming my own opinions while also looking at what other people had to say about dogs representation. I then looked to see if my ideas corresponded with research other people had done.
Significance

This research shows how much pop culture, including movies, reflects broader cultural ideas about humans and dogs at any given time in recent history.
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