



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

**MAINSTREAM MAVERICK?
JOHN HUGHES AND NEW HOLLYWOOD CINEMA**

HOLLY CHARD

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

MAY 2014

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
HOLLY CHARD
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
MAINSTREAM MAVERICK?
JOHN HUGHES AND NEW HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

SUMMARY

My thesis explores debates on the commercial and textual priorities of New Hollywood cinema through examination of the career of John Hughes. I argue that scrutiny of Hughes' career and the products associated with him expose the inadequacy of established approaches to cinematic authorship and New Hollywood cinema. By mounting a historically grounded investigation of Hughes' career, his status within the cinema industry, and his work as a commercially successful and agenda-setting filmmaker, I aim to reevaluate existing perspectives on post-1970s mainstream popular U.S. media.

Drawing on an extensive array of previously unexamined primary materials, the thesis focuses on Hughes' shifting status as a "creative producer" within the U.S. film industry, as well as on the construction of the John Hughes "brand" during the 1980s and 1990s. I explore how Hughes secured considerable industrial power by exploiting opportunities presented by expanding ancillary markets and changing production agendas. I argue that established models for conceptualising industrial trends, such as Justin Wyatt's "high concept", fail to capture the complexities of Hollywood's commercial strategies in this period. I conclude that historical research can challenge previous assumptions and contribute to a more detailed and precise understanding of the operations of the U.S. film industry in this period.

By scrutinizing the films that Hughes wrote, produced and/or directed, I consider how Hughes' films are complexly determined industrial productions that are shaped both by a set of radically fluctuating commercial imperatives, as well as by Hollywood's standardized formats and frameworks. The production of Hollywood cinema may be a collaborative enterprise, but I argue that certain individuals and institutions can exert greater control over aspects of the process.

In conclusion, I suggest that such a historical methodology can illuminate not just the work of one particular filmmaker but can shed new light on the broader operations of Hollywood as a commercial culture industry.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the following people for their support, feedback and encouragement: my supervisors, Dr Frank Krutnik and Dr Thomas Austin; my colleagues in the School of Media, Film and Music, especially Kate Lacey, Nick Till, Andy Medhurst and Sarah Maddox; my colleagues and friends at Worthing Theatres; staff at the University of Sussex library, the British Library and the BFI; the International Association for Media and History; and, finally, to Steve Neale and Niall Richardson, for giving their time to examining this project.

Particular thanks go to my family and friends for helping me to stay the course, especially: Ben for our lengthy conversations and collaborations on popular cultural histories; Sinead who has always been interested this project and has accompanied me to many film screenings; Jack for keeping me sane during the last few months of writing; and, most of all, my longsuffering parents, who have supported me in countless ways.

This research was partially funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council studentship and a University of Sussex Doctoral Award.

Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>RESEARCHING NEW HOLLYWOOD CINEMA.....</u>	<u>9</u>
GENRE, AUTHORSHIP, AND “BI-POLAR” HISTORIES NEW HOLLYWOOD CINEMA	15
RESEARCHING HISTORIES OF “HOLLYWOOD”	23
ARCHIVAL WORK AND THE CHALLENGES OF PRIMARY MATERIALS RESEARCH	29
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND THE USE OF ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS	36
<u>CHAPTER ONE</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>JOHN HUGHES’ EARLY CAREER.....</u>	<u>41</u>
UNIVERSAL PICTURES	45
MCA, HOME VIDEO AND YOUTH AUDIENCES	58
RECORDED MUSIC, SYNERGY AND MTV.....	68
CONCLUSIONS	95
<u>CHAPTER TWO</u>	<u>98</u>
<u>“THE CREATIVE PRODUCER”.....</u>	<u>98</u>
<u>JOHN HUGHES, SYNERGY AND LATE 1980S HOLLYWOOD.....</u>	<u>98</u>
PRODUCER AS BRAND: CONTROL AND COLLABORATION	103
<i>PRETTY IN PINK</i> AND THE ART OF CROSS-PROMOTION.....	107
<i>FERRIS BUELLER’S DAY OFF</i>	124
<i>SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL</i> AND HUGHES MUSIC	133
COMEDIANS AND THE FAMILY AUDIENCE	139
<u>CHAPTER THREE</u>	<u>145</u>
<u>1990S: FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT AND THE JOHN HUGHES BRAND ..</u>	<u>145</u>
JOHN HUGHES’ POSITION WITHIN THE U.S. FILM INDUSTRY.....	147
THEATRICAL RELEASES OF HUGHES’ FAMILY FILMS	153
“YOU CAN TAKE THE WHOLE FAMILY”: MAKING CINEMA A FAMILY EXPERIENCE	156
THE HUGHES BRAND AND ANCILLARY MARKETS	160
“WOW! WHAT A DIFFERENCE!”: SELLING HOME VIDEO TO FAMILIES	161
“NECESSARILY ELEMENTS FOR THE FILM”: TOY TIE-INS AND <i>HOME ALONE 2</i>	168
CONCLUSIONS	179
<u>CHAPTER FOUR</u>	<u>183</u>
<u>MOVIES ABOUT “ORDINARY KIDS”.....</u>	<u>183</u>

<u>TEEN ROMANCE, GENRE AND NARRATIVE.....</u>	<u>183</u>
SCHOLARLY APPROACHES TO THE TEEN FILM	187
THE BREAKFAST CLUB (1985)	190
SIXTEEN CANDLES (1984)	193
PRETTY IN PINK (1986)	200
SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL (1987)	208
TEENAGE SUBJECTIVITIES AND NEGOTIATIONS OF IDEOLOGY.....	215
CONCLUSIONS	219
<u>CHAPTER FIVE</u>	<u>221</u>
<u>DOMESTICATING THE COMEDIAN:.....</u>	<u>221</u>
<u>COMIC PERFORMANCE, NARRATIVE AND THE FAMILY IN JOHN</u>	
<u>HUGHES' 1980S COMEDIAN FILMS.....</u>	<u>221</u>
COMEDIAN COMEDY IN THE 1980s	222
CHEVY CHASE IN <i>NATIONAL LAMPOON'S VACATION</i> (1983)	225
STEVE MARTIN AND JOHN CANDY IN <i>PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES</i> (1987)	232
JOHN CANDY IN <i>UNCLE BUCK</i>	242
<i>NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION</i>	244
CONCLUSIONS	248
<u>CHAPTER SIX</u>	<u>251</u>
<u>FAMILY FILMS, COMEDY AND IDEOLOGY</u>	<u>251</u>
THE <i>HOME ALONE</i> FILMS.....	255
CURLY SUE	262
<i>DENNIS THE MENACE</i>	266
MIRACLE ON 34 TH STREET	271
CONCLUSIONS	276
<u>CONCLUSION:.....</u>	<u>280</u>
<u>"MAINSTREAM MAVERICK"</u>	<u>280</u>
JOHN HUGHES AND THE U.S. FILM INDUSTRY	281
HUGHES' FILMS AS TEXTS	283
THE METHODS OF "CINEMA" HISTORY	285
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	<u>287</u>

List of Illustrations

Image 1 - U.S. Theatrical Release Poster for <i>Sixteen Candles</i>	54
Image 2 - U.S. Theatrical Release Poster for <i>The Breakfast Club</i>	55
Image 3 - U.S. Theatrical Release Poster for <i>Weird Science</i>	56
Image 4- “Everyone’s Watching MCA,” <i>Billboard</i> , 31 August 1985, VSDA-51.	61
Image 5 – “Helpful Hype,” <i>Billboard</i> , 22 December 1984, 41.	63
Image 6 – Front Cover of the LP and CD Releases of <i>The Breakfast Club</i> Soundtrack.....	73
Image 7 - Back Cover of the LP and CD Releases of <i>The Breakfast Club</i> Soundtrack	73
Image 8 – Cover of the Cassette Tape Release of <i>The Breakfast Club</i> Soundtrack.....	74
Image 9 – Cover of the U.S. Single Release of “Don’t You”	74
Image 10 - Cover of the U.S. Single Release of “Fire in the Twilight”	75
Image 11 – Cover of U.S. Promotional Single of ‘Didn’t I Tell You’.....	75
Image 12 – Full page Advertisement for <i>The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack</i> , <i>Billboard</i> , 23 February 1985, 7.	77
Image 13 - <i>The Breakfast Club</i> LP Display Stand	78
Image 14 – Music Video for “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”.....	81
Image 15 – Music Video for “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”.....	81
Image 16 – Music Video for “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”.....	82
Image 17 – Music Video for “Fire in the Twilight”.....	82
Image 18 – Music Video for “Fire in the Twilight”.....	83
Image 19 – Music Video for “Fire in the Twilight”.....	83
Image 20 - <i>Billboard</i> , 22 June 1985, p. 76.....	86
Image 21 – Front Cover of the LP and CD Releases of <i>Weird Science</i> Soundtrack	89
Image 22 - Front Cover of U.S. Single Release of "Weird Science"	89
Image 23 – Music Video for “Weird Science”.....	91
Image 24 – Music Video for “Weird Science”.....	91
Image 25 – Music Video for “Weird Science”.....	92
Image 26 – Music Video for “Weird Science”.....	92
Image 27 – Print Advertisement for the <i>Pretty in Pink</i> soundtrack,.....	111
Image 28 - OMD "If You Leave" 45 Single.....	112
Image 29 - OMD "If You Leave" 12" Single.....	112
Image 30 - <i>Pretty in Pink</i> U.S. Theatrical Release Poster	116
Image 31 - <i>Pretty in Pink</i> Print Advertisement, <i>New York Times</i> , 7 March 1986, C9.	118

Image 32 - Advertisement for <i>Pretty in Pink</i> video release	123
Image 33 - <i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i> Preview Screening Giveaway Poster	125
Image 34 - <i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i> Sticker	125
Image 35 - <i>FBDO</i> Pin Badge	125
Image 36 - Print Advertisement for <i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i> , <i>New York Times</i> , 29 June 1986, H10.	126
Image 37 - Print Advertisement for <i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i> , 11 July 1986, C12.....	127
Image 38 - "Make it a Paramount Summer!" Advertisement.....	129
Image 39 - "Oh Yeah" 7" single sleeve.....	131
Image 40 - "I Go Crazy" 7" Single Cover Art (Front).....	136
Image 41 - "I Go Crazy" 7" Single Cover Art (Reverse)	136
Image 42 – Dave Wakeling "She's Having A Baby" 7" (Front)	136
Image 43 – Dave Wakeling "She's Having A Baby" 7" (Reverse)	136
Image 44 – Music Video for Dave Wakeling's "She's Having A Baby"	137
Image 45 – <i>Miracle on 34th Street</i> promotion, <i>New York Times</i> , 23 November 1994, C16. ...	159
Image 46 – Advertisement for Warner Family Entertainment Video, <i>Billboard</i> , 10 December 1994, 85.	164
Image 47 – Leaflet for <i>Home Alone 2</i> Toys, Tiger Toys, 1992.	173
Image 48 – Nintendo Entertainment System "Action Set", Box.	176
Image 49 – Girls' Locker room Sequence, <i>Sixteen Candles</i>	196
Image 50 – Opening Sequence, <i>Pretty in Pink</i>	202
Image 51 – Extreme Close-Up On Molly Ringwald's Hair, <i>Pretty in Pink</i>	204
Image 52 – Extreme Close-Up On Molly Ringwald's Lips, <i>Pretty in Pink</i>	204
Image 53 – The Girls' Locker Room in <i>Some Kind of Wonderful</i>	213
Image 54 – Owen: The Abject "White Trash" Body.....	240
Image 55 – Cousin Eddie, <i>National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation</i>	247
Image 56 – Todd and Margot, <i>National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation</i>	247
Image 57 – <i>Miracle on 34 Street</i>	273
Image 58 – <i>Miracle on 34th Street</i>	273
Image 59 – <i>Miracle on 34th Street</i>	275

Introduction

Researching New Hollywood Cinema

The star of the movie is a mere lad of 9, and the story line has been criticized as implausible and excessively sentimental. But *Home Alone* has overcome those obstacles and others, becoming the first blockbuster hit of the holiday film season...¹

Released in November 1990, the *Home Alone* “stunned Hollywood executives by laying to waste every huge-budget action blockbuster and sure-fire sequel aimed at the movie-dense Christmas season.”² A family-oriented comedy movie with a ten-year-old protagonist, *Home Alone* was by no means conceived as a big-budget blockbuster. Directed by Chris Columbus, the movie starred child-actor Macaulay Culkin performing alongside a cast that included Joe Pesci, Catherine O’Hara and John Heard. In spite of modest expectations, the movie grossed over \$285 million at the domestic box office and a further \$190 million overseas.³ Not only did *Home Alone*’s considerable international box office success reinforce the perception that family-oriented comedies were proving popular with American and international audiences, it also consolidated the status of the movies’ writer and producer, John Hughes. As *Entertainment Weekly* observed, the filmmaker was already highly influential:

the movie’s most important big name was Hughes, the 40-year-old writer-director-producer whose Hollywood clout is so complete that he doesn’t have to live or even work there. Instead, he operates his own film fiefdom, Hughes Entertainment in suburban Chicago.⁴

Despite his obvious commercial significance, the man widely credited with creating the highest-grossing comedy movie in the history of Hollywood, barely registers in histories of

¹ Larry Rohter, “How a 9-Year-Old Boy Rode A Dark Horse to Success,” *New York Times*, 10 December 1990, C13.

² Bill Carter, “Him Alone,” *New York Times*, 4 August 4 1991, SM30.

³ “*Home Alone*: Box Office Summary,” *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=homealone.htm>

⁴ Margot Dougherty and Melina Gerosa, “Big Kid: *Home Alone*’s Macaulay Culkin -Why kids are suddenly showing grow-up clout at the box office,” *Entertainment Weekly*, 7 December 1990, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,318804,00.html>.

the U.S. film industry. Moreover, his approach to filmmaking sits awkwardly in relation to established models of critical and historical analysis.

Home Alone's simple concept – a boy, left home alone at Christmas, who defends his house from burglars – was widely cited as a key factor in the movie's success. In his review for the video release of the movie, *Entertainment Weekly*'s Ty Burr, asserted, "*Home Alone* is as synthetic as anything cranked out by the John Hughes screen Ring-Ding factory [...] *Home Alone* expertly polishes its gem of a concept."⁵ Indeed, during the 1980s, Hughes built his professional reputation on his ability to develop films based upon simple, marketable "concepts" that offered audiences consistent and predictable pleasures. In a 1991 *New York Times* profile of his career, Hughes stated that his motivation as a filmmaker was to produce mainstream movies that satisfied his target audiences:

I have no interest, none whatsoever, in doing something for myself instead of for the audience. My movies are popular because they do what they're supposed to do. You get what you think you're going to get. They're not pretentious. They're not hyped. They're accessible.⁶

Demonstrating characteristic self-awareness of his position within the film industry, Hughes' comments alluded to the fact that many critics had dismissed his body of work, despite his films' apparent popularity with moviegoers. As the *New York Times*' Bill Carter observed, "The movies have been disparaged, for the most part, by serious film critics [...] Yet it is obvious that the films succeed on the level of entertainment."⁷ As mainstream Hollywood products, Hughes' movies made few appeals to more elite, or as Hughes put it "pretentious", taste cultures. Nor were they "hyped", big-budget, special effects blockbusters. Instead, as Roger Ebert observed in 1991, "he takes these typical, everyday, universal American experiences [...] It's not monsters, it's not *Star Wars*, it's just everyday stuff."⁸

An *Entertainment Weekly* reviewer, summarising the two main affective appeals of *Home Alone*, suggested that, "Hughes comedies have always been fuelled by two modes, the

⁵ Ty Burr, "Video Review: *Home at Home*," *Entertainment Weekly*, 23 August 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,315280,00.html>.

⁶ Bill Carter, "Him Alone," SM33.

⁷ Bill Carter, "Him Alone," SM33.

⁸ Roger Ebert, "*Home Alone* Reappraisal," *At The Movies*, Season 5, Episode 59, 2 February 1991.

sadistic and the sentimental.”⁹ While not always “sadistic”, virtually all of Hughes’ films use humour in an attempt to offset sentiment. Moreover, consistent with what Richard Maltby terms Hollywood’s “commercial aesthetic”,¹⁰ Hughes’ films are constructed to satisfy the audience’s emotional desires through the generation of affect. In a 1984 interview concerning his directorial debut, *Sixteen Candles*, Hughes pointed out that this strategy was intentional:

It’s part of my style. I like to take things to a comic extreme, once in a while. Just to say: “No, I’m not afraid to go this far. This picture is not afraid to go this far.” Just as it’s not afraid to be touching.¹¹

Consistent with a desire to stimulate audience emotions, all of Hughes’ films follow the convention of the “utopian” happy ending. Without doubt, the filmmaker was aware of the pleasures that audiences can gain from engaging with narrative resolutions that would be implausible in real life. In 1985 he stated that, “I get hit a lot of the time for having sentimental endings. And I do it deliberately.”¹² Although it may not have been Hughes’ intention to persuade his audiences to adopt a particular political position, there is an ideological dimension to such an approach. “Sentiment,” argues Maltby, “is the tool by which abstract political ideas can be personified in immediate, emotional terms.”¹³

Following the success of *Home Alone*, John Hughes sought to capitalize on his box office credentials, and on his reputation for “speed and diligence,” in order to obtain a lucrative contract with one of the major Hollywood distributors.¹⁴ In April 1991 *Variety* printed an editorial by Peter Bart that traced John Hughes’ trajectory from a “bespectacled, bewildered, bedazzled” industry newcomer to the man behind the “mindboggling success of *Home Alone*.”¹⁵

The saga of the 40-year-old Hughes reads like a perverse Hollywood success story.

In a whirlwind decade, Hughes has made tens of millions of dollars for himself and

⁹ Owen Gleiberman, “Movie Review: *Curly Sue*,” *Entertainment Weekly*, 8 November 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,316085,00.html>.

¹⁰ Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 14–16

¹¹ “Bobbie Wyngat interviews John Hughes for *Sixteen Candles*,” *NBC5 Entertainment*, NBC5 KXAS-TV, 1984, <http://vimeo.com/15462712>.

¹² John Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows, *AFI Harold Lloyd Masters Seminars*, 1 May 1985, <http://www.afi.com/onscreen/pod/allpods.aspx>.

¹³ Richard Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Metuchen, NJ, 1983), 178

¹⁴ Peter Bart, “Can Hughes Lose?,” *Variety*, 8 April, 1991, 3.

¹⁵ Bart, “Can Hughes Lose?,” 3.

hundreds of millions for the studios. In so doing he has spread more than his share of anxiety and grief.¹⁶

Although he was a fresh face in Hollywood during the early 1980s, Hughes was a published writer with previous corporate experience. He had once been Associate Creative Director at advertising agency Leo Burnett and Senior Editor at *National Lampoon*. By no means naïve, from the start of his filmmaking career he displayed business savvy and quickly established a reputation as a formidable dealmaker. According to a 1983 article in trade publication *Back Stage*, Hughes made “three deals in three days” during his first trip to Los Angeles.¹⁷ Bart’s claims that the “cuddly, nerd-looking guy responsible for such heartwarming flicks as *Sixteen Candles* and *Home Alone*” was “a nightmare” to work with were to, some extent, symptomatic of the Hollywood establishment’s uneasiness with Hughes’ success.¹⁸ In interviews, Hughes often expressed ambivalence toward studio executives and attributed his decision to become a director to a desire for greater control over his screenplays. “A lot of this business is how much can you control the process and how much you will be controlled,” he suggested in 1985.¹⁹

Following two-months of dialogue and a “bidding war” between Twentieth-Century Fox and Sony Corporation’s Columbia Pictures Entertainment unit, Hughes signed a non-exclusive seven-picture deal with Twentieth-Century Fox in mid-April 1991.²⁰ In fact, Fox felt that negotiations were sufficiently important to warrant the involvement of Fox that News Corporation’s chair Rupert Murdoch in the process, alongside studio chairman Joe Roth.²¹ The success of *Home Alone* was without doubt a determining factor in negotiations. By the start of April 1991, the movie had grossed \$250 million at the North American box office and was predicted to generate over \$350 million worldwide.²² The deal with Fox, valued at over \$200 million, made Hughes one of the highest paid and most powerful filmmakers in Hollywood, positioning him alongside other major producers of the period,

¹⁶ Bart, “Can Hughes Lose?,” 3.

¹⁷ Sharon Lloyd Spence, “Chicago Screenwriter Makes His Directorial Debut,” *Back Stage*, 12 August 1983, 54.

¹⁸ Bart, “Can Hughes Lose?,” 3.

¹⁹ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

²⁰ Paul Gorman, “Hughes links with Fox in seven-feature slate,” *Screen International*, 19 April 1991, 6; Michael Cieply, “Fox Says ‘Big Deal’ to New Hollywood Frugality,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 February 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-14/business/fi-1646_1_fox-film.

²¹ Gorman, “Hughes links with Fox in seven-feature slate,” 6.

²² “Home Alone: Weekly Box Office,” *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=homealone.htm>

such as Steven Spielberg, and Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer.²³ According to *Screen International*, Hughes' contract entitled him to fees of between \$11 million and \$12 million, before payments for participation were included.²⁴ Such large sums of money demonstrate the extent to which Hughes was considered a valuable asset, given that most top-end producers during this period received a producing fee in the region of \$500,000 per picture.²⁵

John Hughes undoubtedly occupied a particularly privileged position in Hollywood during the early 1990s. In fact, the costly deal between Hughes and Fox appeared to contradict prevailing industry attitudes and business strategies, as reported in the trade press. During this period, the major distributors and their parent companies faced renewed financial pressures. Fox was no exception, and the trade press and newspapers dedicated extensive coverage to Wall Street's close monitoring of News Corporation's financial situation.²⁶ As a general rule, many of the major distributors claimed that they were reluctant to enter into major deals with filmmakers due to agendas of "cost-cutting". Hughes' deal demonstrated the lengths that the major companies would go to in an attempt to secure filmmakers who appeared to have an understanding of audiences. Referring to Hughes' new contract, the *Los Angeles Times* commented, "If the age of the Hollywood mega-deal is really over, 20th Century Fox Film Corp. apparently hasn't heard the news."²⁷ Moreover, the studios were increasingly skeptical about the concept of the "star director" following the commercial underperformance of certain filmmakers, who had failed to demonstrate that they could be a box office draw, claimed *Variety*.²⁸ By 1991, Hughes was arguably one of the major exceptions to this rule with his name being used as a major selling point in promotional materials.

The international box office achievements of *Home Alone* John Hughes' 1991 deal with Twentieth-Century Fox was the culmination of a highly successful decade that saw the filmmaker, through a combination of strategy and serendipity, consolidate his industrial

²³ Cieply, "Fox Says 'Big Deal' to New Hollywood Frugality."

²⁴ Gorman, "Hughes links with Fox in seven-feature slate"; "Directors," *Screen International*, 11 December 1992, 22.

²⁵ Cameron Stauth, "Masters of the Deal," *American Film*, 1 May 1991, 30.

²⁶ Terry Illott, "Wary bankers keep Murdoch hanging," *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 131; Paul Noglow, "Bankers Bearing Down," *Variety*, 4 February 1991, 1.

²⁷ Cieply, "Fox Says 'Big Deal' to New Hollywood Frugality."

²⁸ Charles Fleming, "A-list helmers healthy despite poor year," *Variety*, 25 March 1991, 109.

influence and to develop a recognizable “brand”. Since his industry debut in 1982, nineteen of Hughes’ screenplays had been turned into feature films, making him “the most credited, most bankable scriptwriter” of the 1980s.²⁹ On numerous occasions, Hughes proved that he was able to develop films that were successful at the box office and in ancillary markets. This exceptional commercial track record and his unusually prolific output enabled him to progress quickly through the industry hierarchy.

During the 1980s, John Hughes entered into partnerships with the major distributors, despite what would later be described as “a marked antipathy toward official Hollywood.”³⁰ He worked with Universal Pictures throughout the decade and collaborated with Paramount Pictures from 1985 onwards. Seeking to distance himself from Los Angeles and to assert creative control over his output, he set up the Chicago-based production company Hughes Entertainment in 1985. Without doubt, Hughes’ decision to become a producer and to develop his own production company secured his status within the U.S. film industry. Through his production outfit, Hughes gained finance and distribution deals for various projects, the vast majority of which were based on his own screenplays. Aided by his distance from both Los Angeles and New York, Hughes enjoyed a high level of autonomy from his distributors and financiers, retaining close creative control over productions. Crucially, Hughes assembled a team of key collaborators in order to create movies that were consistent with the John Hughes “brand.”

This brief discussion of John Hughes’ status in Hollywood at, what would turn out to be, the pinnacle of his career, provides some indication of how industrially significant the filmmaker was during the 1980s and early 1990s. Despite the historical significance of Hughes’ career as a creator of popular entertainment, previous histories of the period have not accounted for, or in many cases even acknowledged, Hughes’ exceptional commercial track record and status within the U.S. film industry. This chapter establishes why John Hughes’ role within the U.S. film industry and his films have been overlooked, through consideration of how scholarly approaches have shaped understanding of popular American cinema. This process will allow for critical reflection on what approaches are suitable for examination of Hughes’ work within the U.S. film industry and analysis of his movies as Hollywood products and popular cultural texts of the 1980s and 1990s. Rather

²⁹ Bill Carter, “Him Alone,” SM32.

³⁰ Bill Carter, “Him Alone,” SM32.

than making a case for “valorizing” Hughes’ films on aesthetic or ideological grounds, this chapter argues that they should be viewed as products of Hollywood’s system of entertainment.

Genre, Authorship, and “Bi-Polar” Histories New Hollywood Cinema

Despite the fact that many contemporary histories of Hollywood cinema tend not to discuss theory explicitly, producing a historical account of a particular period is, nonetheless, a historiographic act. Making decisions about what material to consider and how it should be approached, involves “[deciding] against many other alternatives, thus implicitly choosing one mode of historical explanation over another.”³¹ Obviously, scholars must make choices about which films and primary materials to discuss, but the process of selection is often closely bound to established analytical frameworks, which are far from value-neutral. As well as a canon of films, there is “also a canon of literature about film and a canon of film methodologies.”³² The development of film studies as a discipline has, undoubtedly, shaped historical understanding of cinema. As Eric Smoodin has pointed out, “...film scholarship most broadly, and the analysis of film history more narrowly, has since the mid-1950s been dominated by the study of the film itself, often organised around genre, narration, or authorship.”³³ The influence of these paradigms has limited understanding of popular American cinema because much scholarship has avoided discussion of Hollywood movies as industrial products and as popular entertainment. “Rather than recognize Hollywood’s commercial aesthetic, film criticism has frequently attempted to reconstruct its products in terms more amenable to traditional criticism,” notes Richard Maltby.³⁴

Within genre theory and criticism, argues Steve Neale, “canons of critical preference rather than those of empirical or historical enquiry, have often resulted in uneven degrees of

³¹ Charles F. Altman, “Towards a Historiography of American Film,” *Cinema Journal* 16, no. 2, (Spring 1977), 1.

³² Janet Staiger, “The Politics of Film Canons,” *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1985), 18.

³³ Eric Smoodin. “The History of Film History,” in *Looking Past The Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

³⁴ Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 46.

attention discussion and research.”³⁵ The extensive consideration that scholars have given to certain genres, such as the western, gangster film, war film and film noir, suggests genre critics’ elevation of genres that engage thematically with “patriarchal and masculine concerns.”³⁶ Many film scholars have been attracted to genres and texts that overtly engage with political and moral issues in a serious manner, motivated, in part at least, by the desire to legitimize film studies and to demonstrate that its objects of study are culturally “worthy.” Clearly there are exceptions to this rule, most notably the “women’s film” which has been discussed extensively, in no small part due to the growth of feminist film scholars. Despite increased acknowledgement of the productive explorations that can be conducted into films that emphasise domestic concerns and suburban life, John Hughes’ movies have been a low priority for genre critics because his body of work is most readily associated with two under-examined genres: the teen movie and the family film. The teenpic, notes Steve Neale, “has for years been important to Hollywood, but rarely, it seems, to genre critics, theorists and historians.”³⁷ Many studies of the genre are surveys of relatively large numbers of films and, often implicitly, focus on the creation of generic taxonomies. As a consequence, much of this work has been preoccupied with film analysis and focuses primarily on how concepts of youth and gender are constructed through narrative. Several of these studies do refer to John Hughes’ work, but focus predominantly on plot structures rather than other aspects of movies. In light of the extent to which their existence is determined by their commercial status, it seems perplexing that relatively few scholars have considered the industrial aspects of teen movie production. The family film has been subject to even less scholarly scrutiny. A handful of articles have been published which focus on Hollywood movies with cross-generational appeal. “As a subject for historical, critical and theoretical analysis, the family film has been woefully under-addressed,” states Noel Brown in his recent book-length history.³⁸ Surprisingly, the majority of previous work on the family film, including Brown’s study, overlooks John Hughes’ work.

Auteurism, John Caughie suggests, has become “a critical position within discourses about cinema, a position which is supported institutionally and ideologically by the ‘received’ cultural aesthetic: a position, that is, which defines the space in which other discourses

³⁵ Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3.

³⁶ Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 101.

³⁷ Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 125.

³⁸ Noel Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, From Shirley Temple to Harry Potter* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 9.

about cinema take place.”³⁹ By achieving this hegemonic status, the concept of auteurism has had considerable influence over how American cinema is understood by scholars, critics and audiences. It is therefore unsurprising that many histories of Hollywood have been constructed in order to privilege the director. Indeed, for the most part, auteurism did offer a practical way to structure discussion of film style and differentiation between films. As Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery observe, “By the end of the 1960s “auteurism” had become the basis of the first self-conscious and fully articulated theory of film history to emerge from the young discipline of cinema studies.”⁴⁰ However, the *politique des auteurs* and the auteurist criticism practiced by Andrew Sarris and critics from *Movie* was principally a formalist approach to cinema, concerned with the valorisation of films on the basis of aesthetic criteria. As a consequence, the insights it could offer into Hollywood cinema were inevitably limited.

The principal downside to auteurism as an approach to cinema history is that its almost exclusive focus on the film text restricts, or even actively excludes, consideration of context. As Allen and Gomery state, “[The] closing off of the auteur enterprise from history might have been logically necessary to protect auteurism as a critical system, but it is both unnecessary and counterproductive when applied to film history.”⁴¹ When Andrew Sarris and critics from *Movie* embarked upon their project of “pantheon” creation, they argued that the auteur’s work transcended institutional and cultural contexts.⁴² Crucially, the privileging of the director has meant that numerous individuals and institutions that have contributed significantly to the American cinema have also been under-examined. It is therefore unsurprising that cinema historians, particularly those concerned with Hollywood’s operations as an industry, are amongst the scholars who have been most critical of auteurism. Janet Staiger, Steve Neale, Richard Maltby and Thomas Schatz, for

³⁹ John Caughie, “Introduction,” in *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*, ed. John Caughie (London: Routledge, 1981), 15.

⁴⁰ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory & Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 71.

⁴¹ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History*, 88.

⁴² In fact, Sarris argued that auteurism ought to be ahistorical. “If directors and other artists cannot be wrenched from their historical contexts,” he asserted, “aesthetics is reduced to a subordinate branch of ethnography.” Andrew Sarris, “Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962,” in *Film Culture Reader*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Praeger, 1970), 128.

example, have all noted that auteurist criticism tends to overlook the cultural, social and institutional contexts of Hollywood films.⁴³

Despite the circulation of numerous critiques of auteurist approaches, certain scholars and critics continue to perpetuate the binary of auteurs and metteurs-en-scène in discussion of New Hollywood cinema. For example, Warren Buckland has argued that Steven Spielberg is an auteur on aesthetic grounds.⁴⁴ Although less common, the term metteur-en-scène is still sometimes used to refer to filmmakers whose work is considered less worthy of aesthetic recognition, commercial filmmakers such as Joe Dante and Ridley Scott for example.⁴⁵ Instead of attempting to scrutinize the canon and its methods of selection and incorporation, such approaches work within existing structures to promote expansion of the canon to include specific texts previously “devalued” or “undervalued” by other scholars. Such arguments frame “value” in aesthetic terms, often through the deployment of auteurist approaches.

Whilst it is somewhat comprehensible that scholars concerned primarily with aesthetic approaches to authorship and, to some extent, with analysis of genre have overlooked John Hughes’ work, the scant attention that his career has received in histories of New Hollywood cinema is more perplexing. Despite his status within the U.S. film industry, Hughes’ career barely registers in accounts of Hollywood in the 1980s and 1990s. Admittedly, Steven Prince’s *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* includes an entry on Hughes, describing him as “the decade’s kind of teen comedy” and “a filmmaker of the eighties.”⁴⁶ However, Prince’s brief summary of Hughes’ eighties career is limited by a lack of space for discussion and remains the exception rather than the rule. Other brief references to Hughes’ films appear in a wider range of texts focusing on

⁴³ Janet Staiger, “Authorship Approaches,” in *Authorship and Film*, ed. David Gerstner and Janet Staiger (New York: Routledge, 2003), 37; Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 11; Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2; Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 5.

⁴⁴ Warren Buckland, *Directed by Stephen Spielberg: The Poetics of the Contemporary Blockbuster* (London: Continuum, 2006), 223. “Spielberg’s blockbusters have their own complex structure, and their popularity does not preclude them from being considered worthy of serious study in themselves as *film*,” he argues.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Limit What Films We Can See*, (London: Wallflower, 2002) 67; Jill Neldes, *Introduction to Film Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 26.

⁴⁶ Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 211.

1980s cinema, such as Chris Jordan's *Movies and the Reagan Presidency* and Leger Grindon's essay '1986: Movies and Fissures in Reagan's America' (printed in *American Cinema of the 1980s*). Such accounts focus on a select group of films, however, and consider primarily how the texts' narratives reflect Reaganite ideology. As a consequence, issues relating to industry and audiences are largely overlooked.

The lack of consideration of Hughes' career can, in part, be attributed to the fact that his body of work resists being situated into the models of New Hollywood proposed by scholars. Although many accounts of the "New Hollywood" purport to offer a view of Hollywood that considers industrial and other contextual factors, the insights given in many texts are fairly limited. Geoff King argues that scholarship has identified two main "versions" of New Hollywood. "Version I" concerns the auteur renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the "independent" sector, "the principal carriers of the legacy of the Hollywood Renaissance."⁴⁷ "Version II" focuses on blockbusters and their relation to corporate interests. As King notes, these two accounts "are rather polarized extremes", and Hollywood "remains large enough, and sufficiently idiosyncratic in its operations, for other kinds of filmmaking to exist between these two poles."⁴⁸ Admittedly, this issue is not restricted to discussion of U.S. cinema – Thomas Elsaesser argues that histories of cinema have often engaged in this form of "boundary drawing" through the articulation of "bipolar models", such as art cinema versus Hollywood cinema and "classical" versus "postclassical" cinema.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, such arbitrary divisions in histories of New Hollywood are unhelpful because they obscure the complexities of industrial organisation and diversity within production strategies since the 1970s.

Those critics who look for the artistic potential of American cinema often emphasize the "auteur renaissance" of the late-1960s to mid-1970s as a high point in its history, a moment which now signals "the aesthetic path not taken."⁵⁰ Scholars' nostalgic accounts of

⁴⁷ Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 84.

⁴⁸ King, *New Hollywood Cinema*, 81.

⁴⁹ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies* 14, no. 2-3 (2004), 80.

⁵⁰ Noel King. "'The Last Good Time We Ever Had': Remembering the New Hollywood Cinema," in *The Last Great American Picture Show: Traditions, Transitions and Triumphs in 1970s Cinema*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Howarth and Noel King (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 29.

cinemagoing in the 1960s reveal an emotional investment in the cinema of this period.⁵¹ The fact that critics and scholars have lamented the arrival of “new” approaches to filmmaking and viewing practices is arguably symptomatic of their belief that industrial shifts have, in their view, eroded this culture, and also demonstrates how cinephilia produces histories where “a collective culture falls into the innumerable shades of the personal.”⁵² As Jon Lewis points out, “the transition from the auteur renaissance to the blockbuster era – a transition set in motion by *Jaws* and *Star Wars* – is of keen interest to film historians.... Many of [whom] first fell in love with the movies in the 1970s.”⁵³ Ultimately, this position characterizes the 1960s and 1970s as a moment of rupture, precipitated by a broader “crisis” in the U.S. film industry.

Despite their inherent limitations, auteurism and blockbuster syndrome have had a significant impact on understanding of New Hollywood cinema. Blockbusters, particularly those associated with Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, have formed the basis for many analyses of Hollywood movies produced during the 1980s and early 1990s. Critics of New Hollywood cinema often emphasise American society’s apparent embrace of Reaganite values in their discussions of blockbuster production. The mid-1980s writings of critics Robin Wood and Andrew Britton have played a particularly influential role in the formation of the concept of “Reaganite Entertainment.” In his 1985 article ‘80s Hollywood: Dominant Tendencies’, Wood declares the decade “the most impoverished, the most cynical, the most reactionary, the *emptiest*, in the entire history of Hollywood.”⁵⁴ Not unlike the proponents of the auteur renaissance, Wood views the 1960s and 1970s as a period when American cinema had the potential to produce a more politically radical cinema. The 1980s, in his view, marks a period when Hollywood movies endorsed the ideology of the Right and audiences succumbed to “the easy satisfactions of reassurance and the restoration of the ‘good old values’ of patriarchal capitalism.”⁵⁵ This viewpoint was echoed by Andrew Britton, who was concerned with “a general movement of reaction and

⁵¹ See, for example: Thomas Elsaesser, “Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment,” in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 28–29.

⁵² Jenna Ng, “The Myth of Total Cinephilia,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 2 (Winter 2010), 148.

⁵³ Jon Lewis, “The Perfect Money Machine(s): George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Auteurism in the New Hollywood,” in *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in Film History and Method*, eds. Jon Lewis & Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 66–67

⁵⁴ Robin Wood, “80s Hollywood: Dominant Tendencies,” *CineAction!* 1 (Spring 1985), 5.

⁵⁵ Wood, “80s Hollywood”, 2.

conservative reassurance in the contemporary Hollywood cinema.”⁵⁶ These critics’ critiques of 1980s Hollywood have undoubtedly shaped perceptions of American movies produced during this period. Studies of eighties and early nineties action movies, in particular, have taken their cues from this form of criticism. During the past decade, more nuanced analyses have emerged that reject the reflectionist position which implies that the majority of films produced in this period promote or are inflected by “Reaganite” values. Rather than a corporate, ideologically-monolithic institution, “American film remained vitally diverse in aesthetic, stylistic, and ideological appeals and expansive enough to accommodate the emergence of important new talents.”⁵⁷

The entry on John Hughes in *Contemporary North American Directors: A Wallflower Guide* demonstrates why orthodox critical perspectives do not permit a particularly productive understanding of the filmmaker’s work. One of the few academic discussions of Hughes’ career, the majority of Mark Bould’s brief appraisal is an Althusserian analysis of ideology in the films that Hughes directed. Where questions of form are contemplated, it is primarily in relation to how they “insinuate the viewer.”⁵⁸ Although Bould raises some pertinent questions about the representational politics of the films, which he states are “reactionary” and “racist”, his analysis is not particularly nuanced.⁵⁹ Moreover, in accordance with his Althusserian perspective, his consideration of the audience is limited to observations on how spectators might be interpellated by the text. Bould’s evident dislike of Hughes’ oeuvre exceeds political reservations, however. Most of his aesthetic objections to Hughes’s movies are clearly matters of taste. For instance, his assertion that *Curly Sue* “pleased nobody” reflects his apparent inability to comprehend why anyone would enjoy such a text.⁶⁰ Moreover, he provides no primary evidence for such claims. Arguably, his criticism displays a tendency that Warren Buckland has described as “solipsistic, concerned

⁵⁶ Andrew Britton, “Blissing Out: The Politics of Reaganite Entertainment (1986)” in *Britton on Film: The Complete Film Criticism of Andrew Britton*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 97.

⁵⁷ Stephen Prince, “Introduction: Movies and the 1980s,” in *American Cinema of the 1980s: Themes and Variations*, ed. Stephen Prince (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 20.

⁵⁸ Mark Bould, “John Hughes,” in *Contemporary North American Directors: A Wallflower Guide*, eds. Yoram Allon, Del Cullen and Hannah Patterson (London Wallflower Press, 2000), 258.

⁵⁹ Bould, “John Hughes,” 257.

⁶⁰ Bould, “John Hughes,” 258.

only with the individual private experiences of the critic.”⁶¹ What is clear, however, is that an approach which only focuses on Hughes’ work as a director and which dismisses the films’ status as popular entertainment provides limited scope for original insights into the filmmaker’s career and the U.S. film industry during the 1980s and 1990s.

The concept of “blockbuster syndrome”, originally put forward by Thomas Schatz, has caused the post-1975 era to be strongly identified with a particular approach to producing and promoting films. Following the commercial success of *The Godfather* (1972), *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977), so goes the argument, Hollywood altered its production strategies to focus on “concepts”, which could be sold across a range of platforms, rather than well-constructed narratives.⁶² Furthermore, according to such perspectives, this approach to big-budget filmmaking led to the elevation of spectacle over narrative, contributing to the development of a “post-classical” rendering of the “cinema of attractions.”⁶³ There have been several objections to this thesis. Firstly, as Steve Neale and Sheldon Hall have demonstrated, from a historical perspective, many of the strategies used for the promotion of blockbusters were established well before the 1970s.⁶⁴ In many respects, therefore, the blockbuster approach is not exclusive to New Hollywood. Secondly, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson argue that blockbuster production, with its perceived emphasis on spectacle, has had a limited impact on the narrative and form of the majority of Hollywood movies.⁶⁵ Finally, while it is true that the major distributors focused on fewer high-budget features from the 1970s onwards, the American film industry as a whole continued to produce a range of features, in order to fill exhibitors’ schedules. As Steve Neale argues in his revisionist historical account of the period, many such accounts of the 1960s and 1970s

⁶¹ Warren Buckland, “Solipsistic film criticism: Review of *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012), 295.

⁶² Thomas Schatz, *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood: Ritual, Art and Industry* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1982), 175.

⁶³ Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3/4 (1986), 70.

⁶⁴ Steve Neale and Sheldon Hall, *Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 9–187. See also Steve Neale, “Hollywood Blockbusters: Historical Dimensions,” in *Movie Blockbusters*, ed. Julian Stringer (London: Routledge, 2003), 47–60.

⁶⁵ See, for example: David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Hollywood “produce a partial and misleading picture of the American film industry, its output and its audiences.”⁶⁶

Researching Histories of “Hollywood”

Whilst acknowledging the valuable contributions previous research has made to knowledge and understanding, this study is situated within a strand of cinema history that seeks to revise accounts of post-studio era Hollywood. Since the late 1980s, significant research has been undertaken which focuses on the larger institutional structures within the U.S. media industries and on key business practices, such as home video and licensed products and tends to be linked to discussion about the blockbuster and an increasingly “globalised” entertainment market. Much of this work traces the macro-level concerns of Hollywood since the 1970s. There is considerable scope, however, to build upon the foundations laid by surveys such as Janet Wasko’s *Hollywood in the Information Age*, Stephen Prince’s *Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow*, Toby Miller et al’s *Global Hollywood* and Paul Grainge’s *Brand Hollywood*. This study is one of an increasing number of projects that consider certain periods of New Hollywood cinema in greater detail by focusing on particular historical case studies. Recent work produced by cinema historians demonstrates how in-depth studies of films and production trends that situate within the industrial and cultural contexts of New Hollywood can further develop understanding of this historical period, which is as complex as any in cinema’s history.

The paucity of information on, and analysis of, John Hughes’ career clearly demonstrates why histories of the New Hollywood structured around flawed conceptual binaries and based upon approaches focused on the film text only provide a partial understanding of the U.S. film industry. As Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery have observed cinema “is a set of complex, interactive systems of human communication, business practice, social interaction, artistic possibilities, and technology.”⁶⁷ In isolation, analysis of Hughes’ films offers limited potential for insights into the significance of his career and into the operations of the U.S. film industry. An historical methodology, which permits a

⁶⁶ Steve Neale, “‘The last good time we ever had?’ Revising the Hollywood Renaissance,” in *Contemporary American Cinema*, ed. Linda Ruth Williams and Michael Hammond (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), 91.

⁶⁷ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History*, 37.

consideration of films, industry and social and cultural contexts represents the most logical way to develop knowledge and understanding of Hughes' career and his body of work. Analysis of his career trajectory allows for consideration of how individual filmmakers were able to acquire considerable industrial power during this period. Moreover, his filmmaking projects provide insights into the production strategies deployed in mainstream Hollywood cinema, including developments in marketing and in the exploitation of films in ancillary markets. Therefore, a detailed historical examination of Hughes' career provides an opportunity to explore, and in some cases, challenge key aspects of how New Hollywood has been mapped and conceptualized.

Developments in historiography and film theory since the late 1970s have significantly altered the ways in which film scholars approach historical investigations of films and their contexts. Writing in 1977, Charles Altman observed that, "No longer can a film historian deal with all of the facts, nor can he [sic] pretend that they are objective phenomena divorced from a particular way of looking at them."⁶⁸ Building upon a widespread rejection of objectivist myths and growing acceptance of post-structuralist ideas about the use of evidence, New Film Historians have taken a more complex view of cinema history, drawing upon wider intellectual shifts. Indeed, it is primarily through the appropriation and development of new approaches, that historians have reflected on their own methods.⁶⁹ It is often this form of historiographic dialogue that has demonstrated how an awareness and understanding of theoretical concerns can distinguish scholarly empirical research from objectivist empiricism. In many respects, the reciprocal relationship between film theory and cinema historiography has led to "fundamental reassessments of accepted standards of "historical" or "theoretical" knowledge."⁷⁰ As a consequence, cinema historians have become increasingly conscious of questions of periodisation, historical change and causality, and aware of how the relationship between primary materials and the past can be conceptualised.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Altman, "Towards a Historiography of American Film," 1.

⁶⁹ Studies of early cinema have proved particularly influential in this respect. Robert Sklar, "Does Film History Need A Crisis?" *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 136.

⁷⁰ Melanie Nash, "Introduction," *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies* 14, no. 1 (2003), 16.

⁷¹ Charles F. Altman, "Towards a Historiography of American Film," 23–24. For a summary of several of the most well-known periodizations of Hollywood cinema and their motivations see: Richard Abel, "History Can Work for You, You Know How to Use It," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 102.

Films do not offer a straightforward reflection of a particular historical context. As Janet Staiger notes, “theory taught [historians] that any relation of a text to its social context is complex, mediated and decentred.”⁷² The representations that movies offer are mediated and can distort, transform or contradict social reality. Given that John Hughes’ films, by and large, conform Hollywood’s commercial aesthetic, it is important to adopt a method of analysis that will allow for productive evaluations of the films’ representational strategies. Richard Dyer argues that the utopianism of popular entertainment is primarily affective, tied to feelings as opposed to articulating a specific political position. Therefore, when analyzing Hughes’ films, it is important to consider what Dyer describes as “representational” signs and “non-representational” signs (for example, “colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, camerawork”).⁷³ In other words, in order to consider how a film text negotiates ideology, it is necessary to move beyond an analysis of plot. Such a discussion needs to be underpinned by understanding of relevant social and cultural shifts that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, as well as awareness of how these shifts were represented in mainstream discourses. An examination of John Hughes’ films therefore needs to consider formal features of the films and to be situated in relation to relevant social and cultural contexts. Accordingly, analysis of visual and aural aspects of the movies should situate them in their popular cultural contexts and consider the extent to which they borrow from other mass entertainment forms, such as television and popular music.

Cinema influences, and is influenced by, a wide range of cultural forms and processes. Of course, intertextuality is nothing new. “Film as a business and an art was never isolated from the other entertainments or from the political and aesthetic expressions with which it competed,” observes Janet Staiger.⁷⁴ Increased acknowledgment of this relationship means that consideration of intertextuality is now commonplace in most areas of film studies. Indeed, analyses derived from such an approach can offer new perspectives on both canonical and less well-known films. Contrary to what Charles Musser seems to suggest, however, not every such enquiry needs to offer a “radical interpretation.”⁷⁵ Moreover, given the vast array of cultural texts that inform both the creation and subsequent interpretation of a movie, choices still have to be made about which intertexts seem most

⁷² Janet Staiger, “The Future of the Past,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 128.

⁷³ Richard Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia,” in *Only Entertainment*, 2nd ed, ed. Richard Dyer (London: Routledge, 2002), 20.

⁷⁴ Janet Staiger, “The Future of the Past,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 127.

⁷⁵ Charles Musser, “Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 103.

pertinent to a particular consideration of the film, or films, in question. The fundamental goal of such approaches is to situate films within a broader network of texts and processes. Moreover, the audience's engagement with a movie cannot be separated from their awareness of other cultural texts, therefore scholars must acknowledge "the force exerted by the external conditions governing the text's existence, particularly those intertextual activations on reading that exceed intrinsic control [by the text]."⁷⁶ In a related shift, cinema historians have called for a greater consideration of the reciprocal relationship between cinema and other media. "Scholars need to stop thinking of film history as *film* history and start thinking more about *media* history," asserts Janet Staiger.⁷⁷ From an industrial perspective, it makes considerable sense to reflect on how cinema relates to, for example, television, popular music and publishing.

Cinema historians have, for a number of years, argued that reception and the role of audiences are important areas of research. Moving beyond theoretical perspectives that suggest that the text constructs the spectator, contemporary cinema historians ask "how spectators experience film-texts in determined contexts which make them meaningful in the spectators' time and place."⁷⁸ As audience research has demonstrated, audiences are composed of individual agents who embody multiple, intersecting identities and can occupy a range of shifting positions in relation to the film text. It is often not possible for the historian to access these perspectives, however, and so it is necessary to "theorize spectatorial positions from an analysis of constituent social groups and across an array of socially constructed subjectivities."⁷⁹ Where this research considers audiences, it does so in relation to group identities, such as class, age, gender and race, in order to make observations about industrial and textual aspects of John Hughes movies in particular and Hollywood cinema in general. This conceptualization of audiences corresponds to what Janet Staiger describes as a "historical materialist approach" to reception, which perceives "the identities and interpretative strategies and tactics *brought by spectators to the cinema*" as

⁷⁶ Barbara Klinger, "Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture," *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 4 (Summer 1989), 7.

⁷⁷ Staiger, "The Future of the Past," 127.

⁷⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, "Writing and Rewriting Film History: Terms of a Debate," *Cinema et Cie* 1 (Fall 2001), 31.

⁷⁹ Melanie Nash, "Introduction," 13.

“historically constructed by particular historical circumstances.”⁸⁰ In other words, a historical account of Hughes’ films should consider how such texts were understood and experienced by audiences at the time.

Hollywood cinema, as a system, is closely bound to audience expectations. It is therefore important for any history to consider the relationship between industry, texts and audiences. Scholarship on film genre and “high concept” provides a useful foundation for how connections between producers, texts and consumers might be conceptualized. According to Steve Neale, Hollywood genres are “specific systems of expectations and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema and which interact with films themselves during the course of the viewing process.”⁸¹ These expectations are generated through exposure to Hollywood films and to the discourses that constitute cinema’s “intertextual relay”. The audiences who consumed Hughes’ films would undoubtedly have developed this form of consumer competence. In the process of making choices based upon previous experiences, audiences would have been invited to evaluate a range of “pre-sold” elements, not just genre. As Rick Altman argues, “...poster texts and trailer voice-overs systematically stress *proprietary* characteristics (star, director and related successful films by the same studio) over *shareable* determinants like genre.”⁸² In this manner, distributors aim to create numerous selling points for each feature, which make it appeal to certain demographic groups. “High concept”, which became a popular term in the U.S. entertainment industry during the 1980s, is allied to this approach to selling films. High concept movies often attempted to capitalise on previous successes and, according to Justin Wyatt, were differentiated as products “through an emphasis on style within the films, and through an integration with marketing and merchandising.”⁸³ Analysis of the publicity campaigns for John Hughes’ films should therefore provide insights into how the films “packaged” for particular audiences, which should also prompt evaluation of Wyatt’s observations.

⁸⁰ Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press), 23. Of course, during the 1980s and 1990s, films were consumed a range of contexts and in a variety of formats, not just in the cinema.

⁸¹ Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 31.

⁸² Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), 117.

⁸³ Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 7.

Although promotional materials are relatively easy to access, researching reception presents a number of issues. The main source of information on reception that is available to historians is printed reviews from national newspapers and magazines, which have been thoroughly archived. As a consequence, cinema historians tend to focus reviews printed in East and West Coast Publications, particularly the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and the *Los Angeles Times*. These “quality” publications offer a representation of “educated”, cosmopolitan, middle-class tastes. The emphasis of their reviews is, accordingly, on artistry and the “value” of the film. Consequently, they do not necessarily have a strong track record for predicting commercially successful films. In fact, they often champion films that prove unpopular with audiences and disparage commercially successful movies. The relevance of such perspectives therefore needs to be evaluated critically. Cinema historians should resist the temptation, suggest Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery, “to assert a correlation between critical judgment and “public taste,” because there have been numerous instances of films that were commercially successful but disparaged by critics.⁸⁴

This problem of how to evaluate reception is particularly apparent in the case of John Hughes’ films. As movies distributed by the major Hollywood companies, his films were reviewed widely in the national press. For the most part, critics were often highly dismissive of Hughes’ films and did not appear to comprehend why they would appeal to audiences. As *Variety*’s Richard Natale noted in November 1991, “Hughes’ films have never been critics’ movies.”⁸⁵ In fact, some critics even went so far as to insult filmmaker’s target audience. The filmmaker was certainly aware of the disconnect between critic’s perspectives on his work and his target audience’s tastes. In a 1985 discussion of the reception of *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club* he argued, “I think what critics don’t look at is that these things are written for an audience and I took that audience’s sensibilities into account.”⁸⁶ Certain reviewers did appear to have a better handle on audience’s tastes. Television critics, particularly Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, were often more positive about Hughes’ movies, evaluating as entertainment and paying greater attention to the emotional pleasures that they might offer audiences.⁸⁷ Discussion of the

⁸⁴ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History*, 90.

⁸⁵ Richard Natale, “WB Pic Proves There’s Life After First Week,” *Variety*, 18 November 1991, 3.

⁸⁶ John Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

⁸⁷ Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 55.

relationship between Hollywood's promotional discourses, different forms of film criticism and audiences forms an important area of this research.

As a consequence of calls to examine range of contextual factors, many cinema historians have focused less on the content of films and more on cinema as a social and cultural process.⁸⁸ This approach has reinforced arguments for use of a wide range of primary materials in order to research histories of cinema. However, contemporary historians continue to debate the importance of films as primary materials. On the one hand, many film historians consider films themselves to be "the main primary sources" in their work.⁸⁹ On the other hand, other cinema historians, such as Eric Smoodin and Jon Lewis, have investigated, "...the possibility for film scholarship without films; for using primary materials other than films themselves for examining the history of the cinema in the United States."⁹⁰ Although it has become apparent that "cutting across media-specific histories rather than reinforcing them can facilitate rather than impede historical understanding,"⁹¹ it is not necessarily advantageous to overlook the specificity of cinema. Hollywood cinema offers a particular set of attractions that audiences are willing to pay for and films themselves are clearly central to the experience of cinema as entertainment. Moreover, each movie is a distinct product and "as an economic entity depends on its potential existence as a spectacle offering its consumers an aesthetic experience."⁹² Consequently, this study considers John Hughes' films from a range of perspectives, as both industrial products and texts because their commercial and cultural value and textual aspects were all factors in their commercial success.

Archival Work and the Challenges of Primary Materials Research

Any historical study needs to be based upon adequate evidence. Primary materials research is of particular importance in analyses that seek to challenge or revise previous accounts of

⁸⁸ Richard Maltby, 'New Cinema Histories,' in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 3.

⁸⁹ James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, "Introduction", in *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*, eds. James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 1.

⁹⁰ Smoodin. "The History of Film History," 3.

⁹¹ Musser, "Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema," 105.

⁹² Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment*, 11.

the U.S. film industry. Proponents of cinema history have demonstrated how the discovery and analysis of new or previously ignored primary materials has the potential to open up new fields of enquiry and to shed new light on orthodox histories. As James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper explain, “the new film historian is comparable to an archaeologist who unearths new sources and materials, especially those which have been previously disregarded or overlooked.”⁹³ Clearly, it is in the historian’s interest to gather an extensive range of primary materials, in order to ensure that there is a rigorous foundation for their arguments. For many scholars, this shift towards primary research has consolidated the status of the archive within cinema history. However, locating materials on Hollywood cinema is not necessarily a straightforward task and requires some reflection on preservation agendas, questions of access and the availability of different types of evidence.

Archives are by no means ideologically neutral because they contain documents and artefacts that have been selected for preservation. This process of selection means that many historical documents are absent from archives. Clearly, it is not possible to preserve everything. It is important, however, to consider the prejudices involved in choosing items for inclusion in the archive. “Hierarchies of taste and judgment”, notes Pamela Wilson, have often informed decisions about which items will be formally archived.⁹⁴ As is the case with other areas of popular culture, institutions have not preserved many documents relating to the cinema’s past. Moreover, certain areas of cinema are considerably less well documented than others. For instance, historians researching women’s popular culture have noted the limited efforts to archive materials relating to texts and genres typically associated with women, such as soap operas, because they are not considered worthy of preservation.⁹⁵ Similarly, in *Researching Children’s Popular Culture*, Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh note that children’s popular cultural artifacts, particularly ones associated with “low” culture, such as film and television tie-in products, have rarely been preserved.⁹⁶

⁹³ James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, “Introduction”, 7.

⁹⁴ Pamela Wilson, “Stalking the Wild Evidence: Capturing Media History through Elusive and Ephemeral Archives,” in *Convergence Media History*, eds. Janet Staiger and Sabine Hake (London: Routledge, 2009), 185.

⁹⁵ Wilson, “Stalking the Wild Evidence,” 185.

⁹⁶ Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, *Researching Children’s Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2002), 18.

Established academic and public institutions, as well as private companies, are making a growing number of texts available to the public through the internet. Consequently, digitization of primary materials has eroded the distinction, made by some cinema historians, between “cyberspace” and “archival space.”⁹⁷ No longer does the term “archive” always signify a physical space, such as an institutional repository, where documents are collected together. “Archives today are public and private, official and unofficial, non-commercial and commercial, institutional or individual, tangible or digital,” notes Pamela Wilson.⁹⁸ Certainly, technological shifts have the potential to make the historian’s work process much more efficient. Finding an article through a modern digitized archive, for instance, is a much less labour-intensive process than looking for the same piece on microfilm or in hardcopy. Whilst proliferation of archival materials on the internet has potential to widen access to texts and to aid the preservation of cinema’s past, the “industrialisation of film cultural memory” via the internet is nonetheless bound to commercial and popular interests.⁹⁹ Issues of selection and access persist in the digital archive, and the motivations behind decisions about what is digitised and to whom it is made available are not always transparent. Tara Brabazon argues that preservation of masculine and baby boomer popular culture “only increases through the digitization of documents”. She observes, as an example, that “While *Billboard* and *Rolling Stone* are enfolded into the Expanded Academic and Proquest databases, *Smash Hits* and *No. 1* remain outside the parameters of their interest and, one would assume, a university market.”¹⁰⁰ Pay-walls, for instance, are a source of frustration for media researchers, who must cope with the knowledge that material exists but cannot be accessed without the relevant, often costly, subscription.

Despite digital technologies potential to democratize access, not all materials are available through official archives. As has long been the case, fans’ tendency to collect media artefacts has prevented many materials from disappearing entirely. Access to personal collections is, however, limited. Internet auction sites, as well as longer established venues

⁹⁷ Steven J. Ross, “Jargon and the Crisis of Readability: Methodology, Language, and the Future of Film History,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004), 131.

⁹⁸ Wilson, “Stalking the Wild Evidence,” 183.

⁹⁹ Vinzenz Hediger, “*Politique des archives*: European Cinema and the Invention of Tradition in the Digital Age,” *Rouge* 12 (November 2008). Cited in: Marijke de Valck, “Reflections on the Recent Cinephilia Debates,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 2, Winter 2010, 137.

¹⁰⁰ Tara Brabazon, *From Revolution to Revelation: Generation X, Popular Memory and Cultural Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 120.

such as public auctions, second-hand book stores and fan conventions, provide historians with the opportunity to view, and potentially purchase, certain materials. As Pamela Wilson has observed, “Media historians are now venturing into the “low brow” free market to find the documents they seek, since many of them are not circulating in the “highbrow” world of institutional archives.”¹⁰¹ Evidently, such an approach to the acquisition of primary materials is limited by the historian’s access to financial resources. Although institutions may confer little cultural value upon certain artefacts, they may be worth considerable amounts of money on the open market. Therefore, the potential for historians to collect substantial evidence through this route is somewhat restricted.

The extent to which materials pertaining to John Hughes’ career and films have been preserved is linked to such processes concerning preservation and access. It is difficult to make any definitive pronouncements about the long-term situation because only a couple of decades have elapsed since Hughes was active in the U.S. film industry. However, it is already apparent that primary materials linked to Hughes, and related aspects of 1980s popular culture, have not been judged worthy of preservation by institutions thus far, and it seems unlikely that such sources will be a high priority for archival storage in the future. The revelation following Hughes’ death that he kept an extensive personal archive, as reported by David Kamp in *Vanity Fair*, established that a wealth of archival material relating to his career still exists. In spite of some suggestion that the Hughes family might donate the archive to an institution, most probably located in Chicago, these materials have not yet been made publicly available.¹⁰² Media conglomerates have put more effort into preserving their archives since they realized their economic value. As a consequence, Hughes’ films continue to be widely available, although they are not priorities as far as official archives, such as the American National Film Registry, are concerned. Whether they will continue to be freely accessible depends partly on continued demand for the titles as products. Whilst there is potential for the movies to be circulated via digital technology, the manner in which this will occur is extremely difficult to predict. In part, given the current inaccessibility of Hughes’ personal archive, this research has had to base its findings on material found in a range physical and digital locations.

¹⁰¹ Wilson, “Stalking the Wild Evidence,” 186.

¹⁰² David Kamp, “Sweet Bard of Youth,” *Vanity Fair*, March 2010, 156–163. David Kamp, e-mail message from author, 18 February 2010.

The process of researching John Hughes has revealed both the benefits of, and difficulties created by, “a new [archival] paradigm in which the boundaries between public and private, commercial and non-commercial, scholar and consumer are quickly crumbling.”¹⁰³ A number of sources cited in this study were found through fan webpages, online image and video sites, and internet auction sites because these were the only places where certain materials could be accessed. *Seventeen* magazine, for instance, has not been fully archived. Obviously, care must be taken when using such materials, as many of these sites do not provide full citation information. This said, where no alternative exists and where the authenticity of a source seems probable, it seems reasonable to refer to these kinds of texts. Access to many of the more systematic digital archives in this research, typically those of newspapers and magazines, used has been contingent on institutional subscription arrangements and corporate access decisions. Full access to the ProQuest *New York Times* archive, for instance, has proved invaluable. Inversely, changes to public access and to the format in which data is presented, as in the erection of a pay-wall around *Time* magazine’s online archive and *People*’s decision to stop users downloading PDF versions of past issues of the magazine, have reduced ease of access to certain collections. Although frustrating, changes to digital access arrangements need not be insurmountable obstacles. The situation simply highlights the importance of using material from a variety of sources. Accordingly, this research refers to an extensive range of primary materials, including the trade press and general circulation media texts.

A range of trade publications reported on the U.S. entertainment industry during the 1980s and 1990s. Each publication had a differing set of priorities and readerships, which influenced their perspectives in Hollywood and its products. An extensive survey of material from *Variety*, from the early 1980s through to the mid-1990s, forms the foundation for the industry research undertaken in this thesis. During this period, *Variety*’s coverage focused on film, television and theatre. Nevertheless, the publication placed particular emphasis on Hollywood, with the vast majority of cover stories concerning themselves with the major distributors and key personnel in the U.S. film industry. Despite its growing industrial importance, *Variety* did not cover the video industry in much depth during the 1980s. In fact, even in the early 1990s the publication was slow to reflect the changes that had taken place in the media industries. Several other sources have been used to complement the material found in *Variety*. *Screen International* has been consulted for

¹⁰³ Wilson, “Stalking the Wild Evidence”, 187.

additional information on John Hughes' business dealings, particularly his contracts with studios. The British publication compiled and summarized reports from a range of American sources and, as a consequence, printed brief but comprehensive summaries of major industry deals. *The Hollywood Reporter* has also been referred to, although its content overlaps substantially with material printed in *Variety*. As a consequence, articles from the publication are largely used to provide evidence for additional industry perspectives or to demonstrate areas of consensus within the industry. Where relevant, archives of newswires have been consulted because they include numerous press releases. All of these materials provide many of the historical "facts" cited in this work and are also used to support arguments for industry-wide discourses.

Other, specialized trade publications offer more detailed information on particular aspects of the entertainment industry. Many of the reports on filmmaking in Chicago cited in this research were printed in *Back Stage*'s "MidWest" section. Although the publication is best known for its coverage of casting opportunities for actors, during the 1980s it had correspondents based in all of the major entertainment centres in the United States, reporting on film, television and theatre production. Much of this information and analysis appears not to have been published elsewhere. *Back Stage* has therefore been an invaluable resource. Although *Billboard* has been referenced widely in popular musicological texts, it remains an under-utilized resource in cinema history. *Billboard* has been cited because it reported extensively on the video industry during the 1980s and early 1990s. Video was, in many respects, a logical area for *Billboard* to focus on because of the publication's longstanding relationship with home entertainment. The magazine includes video sales and rental charts, information on video distribution and discussion of sales strategies, as well as features examining synergies between the film industry and other sectors. This research is interested in perceptions of audiences and, perhaps more than any other trade magazine, *Boxoffice* focused on the marketing and consumption of films. Aimed primarily at exhibitors, the publication attempted to predict, and react to, the tastes of mainstream audiences. Articles and reviews from *Boxoffice* have been analysed because they frequently offer different perspectives to most other publications. Altogether, these trade publications have proved to be a fruitful source of material for this study, and should perhaps be consulted more widely in future research.

A wide range of mainstream publications has been consulted during the course of this research project. During the 1980s and 1990s, cinema was reported on extensively in the American press. Newspapers, particularly the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*, are used as a source of information on, and analysis of, the U.S. film industry. Various other general circulation publications have been examined including *Time*, *People* and *Entertainment Weekly*. Despite the insights that they offer into the popular discourses of New Hollywood cinema, *People* and *Entertainment Weekly* remain relatively neglected sources of historical information. Television reviews and interviews, from shows including *At The Movies* and *Late Night with David Letterman*, have also been analysed. Although it would have been desirable to survey a wider range of recordings of television shows from this period, many of these shows have not been archived due to practical constraints. As a consequence, all of the television shows cited in this research have been sourced through the internet. These shows are nonetheless worthy of consideration because they provide additional perspectives on the U.S. film industry, its products and its audiences. Such materials are used to complement evidence and perspectives found in print sources. All of these media texts offer have the potential to offer new insights on Hughes' films and Hollywood cinema of the 1980s and 1990s, and therefore form the basis for a number of the arguments posed in this thesis.

As has already been noted, Hughes' films are readily available due to their status in popular culture. In fact, they have been issued in various formats. However, differences in the "text" can be noted across formats, which include 35mm versions, television edits and releases for home entertainment technologies (Betamax, VHS, Laserdisc, DVD, Blu-Ray, and various digital formats). At various stages in the lifecycle of the text, translation to different aspect ratios and additional edits, often made for the purpose of censorship, also produces multiple versions of the same movie. This scenario emphasises the importance of identifying multiple versions of a particular title and establishing their origins, an issue which has been more widely discussed in relation to early cinema.¹⁰⁴ Where relevant, the existence of different versions of the same text will be acknowledged, but it is beyond the scope of this study, however, to trace every single version of each Hughes film in circulation. For the sake of clarity, references will be used to indicate the version of the movie consulted.

¹⁰⁴ Musser, "Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema," 102–103.

Presentation of Findings and the Use of Analytical Frameworks

Debate persists on how to write and present histories of the cinema. Thomas Elsaesser has argued that New Film Historians should build upon a Foucauldian “genealogical” approach that tries “to show the plural and sometimes contradictory past,” thus avoiding narratives of linear causality that encourage *post hoc ergo propter hoc* logic.¹⁰⁵ Advocates of “non-linear history” have argued that historians should avoid linear chronology and distinct, structuring binaries. Additionally, they should resist teleological arguments and evolutionary models that view progress as inevitable. Instead, history should be understood as the product of complex systems. Such a method, requires the historian to trace back from the present to “to different pasts, in modalities that accommodate continuities as well as ruptures.”¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, historical analysis requires the historian to make causal links between agents and events, and to outline perceived trends. In practice, this task is not necessarily straightforward. As Allen and Gomery note, “Assigning “causes” within an open system becomes a challenging task for the film historian because relationships among elements in that system are mutually interactive, not simply linear.”¹⁰⁷

This thesis builds upon a solid foundation of rigorous primary materials research and, without resorting to overly deterministic representations of relationships between events, presents a historical account of John Hughes’ career that maps complex relationships and evaluates causal links between a range of intersecting factors. “Without some notion of causality,” observe Allen and Gomery, “there would be no criterion for the selection and interpretation of data; each “fact” would be equally important.”¹⁰⁸ Wherever possible I have tried to provide a fair representation of events, while retaining a clear focus. As Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell argue, “A non-linear history, materialist or not, should meet the two general criteria applicable to any historiographic project: *verification* and *validity*.”¹⁰⁹ The structure of this study, its methods, and its use of primary materials are determined by a specific set of scholarly contexts, which have been discussed in this chapter. By focusing on John Hughes’ career, this project offers one possible history of this period of Hollywood’s past. This fact does not diminish the accuracy, plausibility or

¹⁰⁵ Elsaesser, “The New Film History as Media Archaeology,” 92–93.

¹⁰⁶ Elsaesser, “The New Film History as Media Archaeology,” 99.

¹⁰⁷ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History*, 214.

¹⁰⁸ Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History*, 214.

¹⁰⁹ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, “Linearity, Materialism and the Study of Early American Cinema,” *Wide Angle* 5, no. 3 (1983), 5.

significance of any findings, but simply suggests that this history is by no means definitive or final. Any scholarly historical account of the cinema participates in an ongoing historical discourse of films and culture. Thus, as Robert Sklar argues, any history will be subject to revision in the future, as scholarly priorities change and the parameters for enquiry shift.¹¹⁰

The thesis is divided into two sections. The first section comprises Chapters One, Two and Three, which focus on John Hughes' career and New Hollywood cinema. The overall structure of this section is roughly chronological. The second section encompasses Chapters Four, Five and Six and discusses John Hughes' films in relation to scholarship on the teen movie, comedian comedy and family film genres. Although the industrial context is dealt with separately from the movies, my discussion of Hughes' film texts tries to map some of the connections between the texts commercial priorities and aspects of narrative and form. Given Hughes' extremely prolific output, it is not possible to consider all of his films in detail. Instead, this project outlines some of the key moments or texts in Hughes' career, positioning them in their historical contexts and reflecting on how they can build on previous work on Hollywood cinema.

Chapter One situates John Hughes' career within the context of the U.S. film industry during the 1980s. In many respects, the filmmaker's professional success was the product of his ability to react to and, in some cases, preempt industrial shifts. I will discuss how Hughes established his "brand" by focusing on a niche market of teenage consumers. With reference to a range of primary materials, I focus primarily on how *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* were marketed and sold on home video and in the recorded music market. By examining Hughes' early career, I will show how Hughes capitalized on the growth of the home video market and the popularity of soundtrack recordings during the mid-1980s. This will allow for a reflection on current knowledge of this period in Hollywood history and on the factors that allowed Hughes to gain considerable industrial power.

Chapter Two focuses on how, from 1986 onwards, Hughes built on the commercial lessons that he had learned during his time at Universal. I will position his work in relation to the commercial strategies of Paramount Pictures and reflect on how scholars have conceptualized the operations of the studio during this period. I argue that concepts such

¹¹⁰ Sklar, "Does Film History Need A Crisis?" 134.

as “high concept” and “synergy” do not provide an adequate account of Hollywood’s commercial strategies in this period. Through discussion of the complex cross-promotional campaign for *Pretty in Pink*, I show some of the ways in which the commercial processes relating to “synergy” can be mapped. The second half of the chapter focuses primarily on how Hughes tried to broaden his appeal and the commercial difficulties he faced during the latter part of the decade. I also consider his growing celebrity and attempts to regulate his image in the press.

Chapter Three situates Hughes’ career and family films within industrial shifts in Hollywood during the 1990s. It commences with discussion of Hughes’ status within the U.S. film industry and outlines how he became a major producer whilst retaining considerable autonomy from the Hollywood studios. Through a consideration of how he was profiled in the trade press and mainstream publications, I will reflect on how Hughes played a central role in the development of the family film, which became an important part of Hollywood’s output during this period. Focusing on product placement, tie-ins, home video and ancillary products, I explore how Hughes and the major Hollywood distributors worked together in order to maximise the overall profitability of his movies. Moreover, I will reflect on how the Hollywood family film was part of a wider cultural shift concerning “family entertainment.” I also consider how Hughes’ professional reputation developed during this period, demonstrating that his professional and cultural status was closely bound to his signature product.

Chapter Four considers the teen movies that Hughes wrote, directed and/or produced during the 1980s. After a brief discussion of *The Breakfast Club*, the chapter focuses primarily on Hughes’ teen romances, *Sixteen Candles*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*. With reference to contemporary newspaper reviews, I will consider how the films were evaluated in relation to the sex comedies and teen slasher films of the early 1980s. Building on previous scholarly work on the teen film, which focuses primarily on analysis of plot, I will explore the movies’ representations of youth by drawing particular attention to their narrative structure and formal features, which constitute a significant part of their appeal as entertainment. By focusing on the romantic comedy, I will be able to draw on scholarship on romantic comedy. Highlighting the collaborations that produced Hughes’ distinctive “brand” of teen movie, the chapter considers the film texts’ visual style

and use of popular music, aspects of the films that play a significant role in their negotiations of identity, including gender, sexuality and class.

Chapter Five focuses on the *National Lampoon Vacation* films, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* and *Uncle Buck*, which John Hughes wrote, directed and/or produced. Although the marketing strategies for these movies drew upon the established personas of Chevy Chase, Steve Martin, Dan Aykroyd and John Candy, the films do not necessarily conform to the conventions of the “comedian comedy” tradition. Instead, they combine some elements of the excesses of comedian performances with the narrative conventions of other genres, such as screwball comedy and the family film. I will argue that by situating the comedy performer within the family, the comedians are to some extent “domesticated”, stripping them of their outsider status. As I will demonstrate, these textual strategies contain the potentially subversive energy of the comedian and limit the potential for ideological critique. My analysis of these aspects of the films will contribute to an examination of how the films represent negotiate questions of identity and ideology.

Chapter Six analyses how the textual strategies deployed in Hughes’ family films attempt to create cross-generational appeal, providing points of identification for both children and adults. The films considered in this chapter are: *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2*, *Dennis the Menace*, *Curly Sue* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. The chapter focuses in particular on the significance of visual and physical comedy and the movies’ evocation of nostalgia through the use visual and aural signifiers. Notably, it analyses how Hughes’ family films use comic violence to neutralise threats posed to the idyllic suburban neighbourhood and to “traditional” family life. Some of these threats are more overt and literal, such as burglars and kidnappers, whereas others are more subtle. In these movies, comedy contains the disruptive, and potentially subversive, energy of children and also allows for the displacement of anxieties concerning the role of women in society and the family. Ultimately, these representational strategies reinforce conservative values and celebrate suburban family life.

The concluding chapter is divided into three sections. First, I summarise the findings from my research into Hughes’ career and New Hollywood cinema. Second, I outline some of the key observations that arise from my analysis of Hughes’ films. Finally, I reflect on the

productivity of my method and consider how it can inform future research into New Hollywood cinema.

Chapter One

John Hughes' Early Career

John Hughes, after directing one film, has been awarded virtual autonomy in a new three-year, \$30 million production pact with Universal Pictures. He polishes off screenplays in one sitting, has assembled a talented cast of youngsters – headed by Molly Ringwald and Anthony Michael Hall – with whom he is making film after film, and works within jogging distance of his north suburban Chicago home.¹¹¹

In the summer of 1984, *Film Comment* announced John Hughes' entry into an elite of directors with a multi-picture production deal with a major Hollywood studio. In many respects, Hughes seemed to operate at the margins of Hollywood cinema. As the article's author, Jack Barth, explained, Hughes focused on modestly budgeted projects made with the participation of major stars, which were aimed at teenagers. He also worked outside of Los Angeles, choosing to film his movies in his home state of Illinois. However, Hughes' ascent through the ranks of the U.S. film industry was no coincidence. His admission to the Hollywood elite during this period provided a clear indication of how the changing media landscape was shaping the commercial priorities of the major studios. Hughes' first three films as a director, *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*, were not major box office hits. However, by focusing on teen movies while on contract at Universal, John Hughes demonstrated to the studios that he had an exceptional understanding of a particular niche market of consumers. His awareness of how teenage consumers experience and consume popular culture allowed him to both satisfy his target audience and generate additional revenues in ancillary markets. Hughes proved that he could develop products "capable of mass production in a variety of formats unified by a common label, style and corporate identity."¹¹² Through the experience he gained on these projects, Hughes was able to develop a sense of the marketing strategies that would suit the changing media environment, particularly Hollywood's distribution strategies.

¹¹¹ Jack Barth, "John Hughes: On Geeks Bearing Gifts," *Film Comment*, June 1984.

¹¹² Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 136.

John Hughes entered the U.S. film industry during a period when non-theatrical release windows started to have a significant influence on studios' agendas. Approximately six months after the end of a movie's theatrical run, it would be released on home video. A couple of months later, the film would appear on pay-per-view cable, then basic cable, and finally broadcast television.¹¹³ The profitability of a film no longer hinged almost entirely on its performance at the box office. During the 1970s, between roughly 70% and 80% U.S. film industry's domestic revenue came from the theatrical release window and distributors received almost all of their non-theatrical revenues from sales to broadcast television.¹¹⁴ As Chart 1 shows, the *proportion* of industry revenue generated by theatrical exhibition declined from 63% of total revenues in 1980 down to 48% in 1984. By 1989, theatrical revenues accounted for just 33% of total industry revenues.¹¹⁵ Even so, the theatrical market for motion pictures remained important, helping to set the value of a film in ancillary markets. Although theatre attendance remained relatively static, increases in ticket prices helped the major distributors to boost revenues from theatrical releases across the 1980s.¹¹⁶ While income from the box office, home video and pay television increased, the licensing fees the studios received from television networks declined because "the overexposure of theatrical features through cassettes and Pay-TV had diluted their value."¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the major studios used much of the additional income received from ancillary markets to offset rising production costs.¹¹⁸ For the major studios, the main benefit of the expansion of ancillary markets was that it allowed companies to spread financial risk. "The ability to coordinate and exploit different media outlets" argues Jon Lewis, "... enabled the big studios to better insulate themselves against potential box-office disappointments."¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 92.

¹¹⁴ David Waterman, *Hollywood's Road to Riches* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 290.

¹¹⁵ Waterman, *Hollywood's Road to Riches*, 290-291.

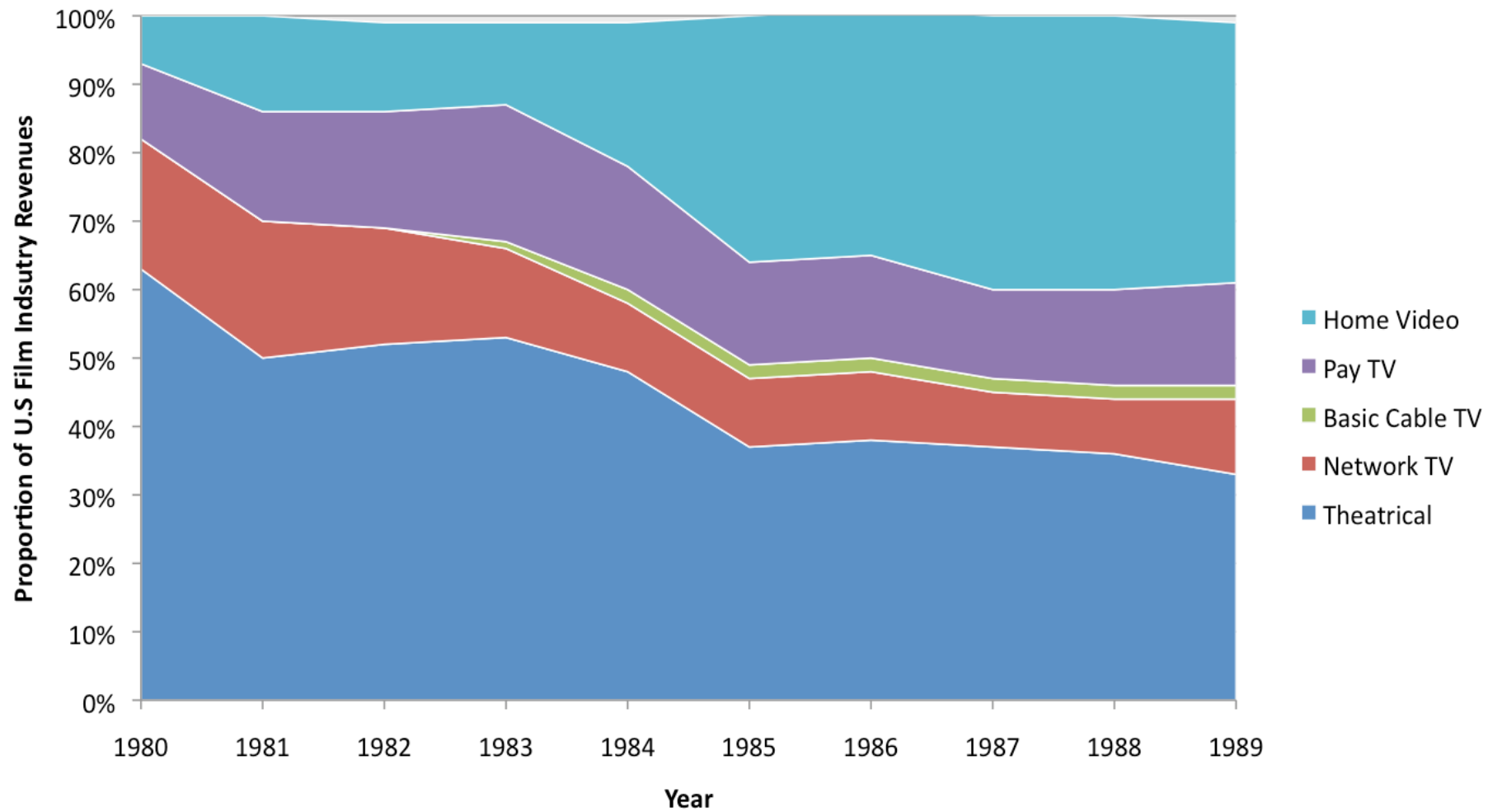
¹¹⁶ Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 1-2.

¹¹⁷ Kerry Segrave, *Movies at Home: How Hollywood Came to Television* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 125.

¹¹⁸ Harold Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis*, 8th ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 97-98.

¹¹⁹ Jon Lewis, "Hollywood in the Corporate Era," in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1998), 97.

Chart 1: Sources of U.S. Film Industry Revenues 1980-1989



Data Source: David Waterman, *Hollywood's Road to Riches*, 2005, pp. 290-29

The increasing importance of non-theatrical revenues gave commercial filmmakers like Hughes incentives to devise movie packages that could be exploited in a range of markets. During the 1980s, those filmmakers who proved themselves to be particularly adept at creating commercial exploitable movies were rewarded with significant industrial power and relative creative, but clearly not financial, autonomy from the major studios. In the New Hollywood, argues Jon Lewis, “Auteurs gain notoriety less for a signature style than for a signature product.”¹²⁰ He suggests that, during the 1980s, Steven Spielberg and George Lucas’ status with the film industry reflected the fact that “Hollywood is an industry that is no longer (just) about making movies.”¹²¹ John Hughes developed his reputation as a filmmaker during the mid-1980s by focusing on the cross-over opportunity teenage market. In a period when a corporate culture of tracking sales and consumption data intensified, Hughes’ apparently quantifiable commercial successes strengthened his position in the deal-making process. Significantly, he seized the opportunity to become a producer, in order to gain greater creative control over his projects. As both Lewis and Warren Buckland observe, many of the most influential creative personnel in 1980s Hollywood were “hyphenates”, occupying several roles the production process. For instance, Warren Buckland argues, “Spielberg is an auteur, *not* because he is working against the Hollywood industry (as were the directors in classical Hollywood)... Instead, Spielberg is an auteur because he occupies key positions in the industry (producer, director, studio co-owner, franchise licensee)...”¹²² Without a doubt, John Hughes’ decision to start producing his own projects gave him much greater control over their production and commercial exploitation and had a significant impact on his influence at the major studios.

This chapter focuses on how John Hughes seized on the opportunities offered by the expanding home video market and the resurgent market for recorded music in the United States. Scholars have given relatively limited consideration to the video industry during the early 1980s, which was a period of rapid and uneven change. With the notable exception of Joshua M. Greenberg’s *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, the majority of previous research has either outlined on the macro-level economic situation, placing particular emphasis on the major Hollywood studios, or considered audiences’ interactions with video from a cultural

¹²⁰ Jon Lewis “The Perfect Money Machine(s): George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Auteurism in the New Hollywood,” in *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in Film History and Method*, eds. Jon Lewis & Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 68.

¹²¹ Jon Lewis, “The Perfect Money Machines,” 68.

¹²² Warren Buckland. *Directed by Stephen Spielberg: The Poetics of the Contemporary Blockbuster*. London: Continuum, 2006. p. 15

studies perspective. Moreover, while much work on New Hollywood cinema acknowledges the importance of home video as an ancillary market, relatively few studies consider how specific films were sold on video. Research into the video releases of John Hughes' films during the period 1984 to 1986 can therefore offer some pertinent insights into how changes that took place in the home video market influenced the marketing and sales of video in the United States. Building on Jeff Smith's and Serge Denisoff's work on cross-promotion between films and recorded music, the second half of this chapter traces how the marketing of the soundtracks for John Hughes' films relates to broader industrial trends. These cross-promotions were often complex operations, involving the coordination of more than one company, and there was considerable variation in how record labels and studios promoted individual releases. This examination of the relationship between the film and music industries also draws on scholarship in film/media studies and popular musicology that considers the impact of MTV on popular music culture and U.S. cinema, including Andrew Goodwin's work on music television. Throughout the chapter, I refer to a range of primary materials, but much of the discussion in this chapter stems from close examination of issues *Billboard* magazine published during the period January 1985 to December 1986. In this period, the publication was at the forefront of coverage of the home video industry, in addition to continuing its extensive coverage of the music industry. In contrast, Hollywood's major trade publications, *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, were relatively slow to react to the growth of video and other ancillary markets. In fact, the "film" industry's limited acknowledgment of the importance of non-theatrical markets contributed to the industry's surprise at John Hughes' sudden success. Before embarking on a detailed discussion of the video and soundtrack releases associated *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*, I will briefly outline the films' production histories, in relation to production agendas at Universal, and discuss how the films were positioned in the market through their theatrical releases.

Universal Pictures

John Hughes' first three movies as a director, *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* were all funded and distributed by Universal Pictures. The filmmaker originally conceived *The Breakfast Club*, which he wrote during July 1982, as a low-budget independent feature. After securing roughly \$1 million of funding from A&M Records, he

started planning the production in the winter of 1982.¹²³ According to Hughes, he decided to write another, more commercial script in order to improve his chances of a career as a director.¹²⁴ The resultant screenplay, which became the movie *Sixteen Candles*, was a much more mainstream comedy but, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, deviated slightly from the established conventions of the teenpic. During the winter of 1982, Hughes sent the script to his agent at ICM who forwarded it to Ned Tanen.¹²⁵ The former president of Universal's film division, Tanen was particularly keen on modestly budgeted movies that could be aimed at the increasingly important 12-to-24-year-old audience. In the past, the executive had been involved with several major youth-oriented hits, including *American Graffiti* (1973), *The Sting* (1973), *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977) and *Animal House* (1978).¹²⁶ Tanen acquired *Sixteen Candles* via his new production company Channel Productions and secured distribution through Universal Pictures. After he signed Hughes to direct *Sixteen Candles*, Tanen convinced Universal to purchase the rights to *The Breakfast Club* from A&M.¹²⁷ With Tanen's backing, Hughes found himself in the unusual position of directing two studio-funded motion pictures in short succession. In the summer of 1984, after shooting both movies, the filmmaker signed a deal that tied him to Universal for three years and was reportedly worth \$30 million.¹²⁸

By the time Hughes signed his first contract with Universal, the studio's market dominance was on the wane following several successful years at the box office. During the 1970s, Universal had seen its profits from theatrical releases increase substantially. By the middle of the decade the studio's operating income was roughly \$110 million per year, up considerably from the average of \$20 million per year generated between 1971 and 1973.¹²⁹ During this time, the studio reduced its output and focused on heavily promoting a few key releases. The box office success of blockbusters, such as *Airport* in 1970, *Earthquake* in 1974 and, most significantly, Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* in 1975 secured Universal's status as one of the leading movie studios. In 1980, Universal broke the industry record for box

¹²³ Sean M. Smith, "Teen Days That Shook The World," *Premiere*, December 1999. Elsewhere Hughes said the figure was in the region of \$750,000 Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

¹²⁴ Smith, "Teen Days That Shook The World."

¹²⁵ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

¹²⁶ David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 313.

¹²⁷ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

¹²⁸ Joshua Greenberg, "Universal Signs Hughes to 3-year pact," *Variety*, 2 May 1984, 19.

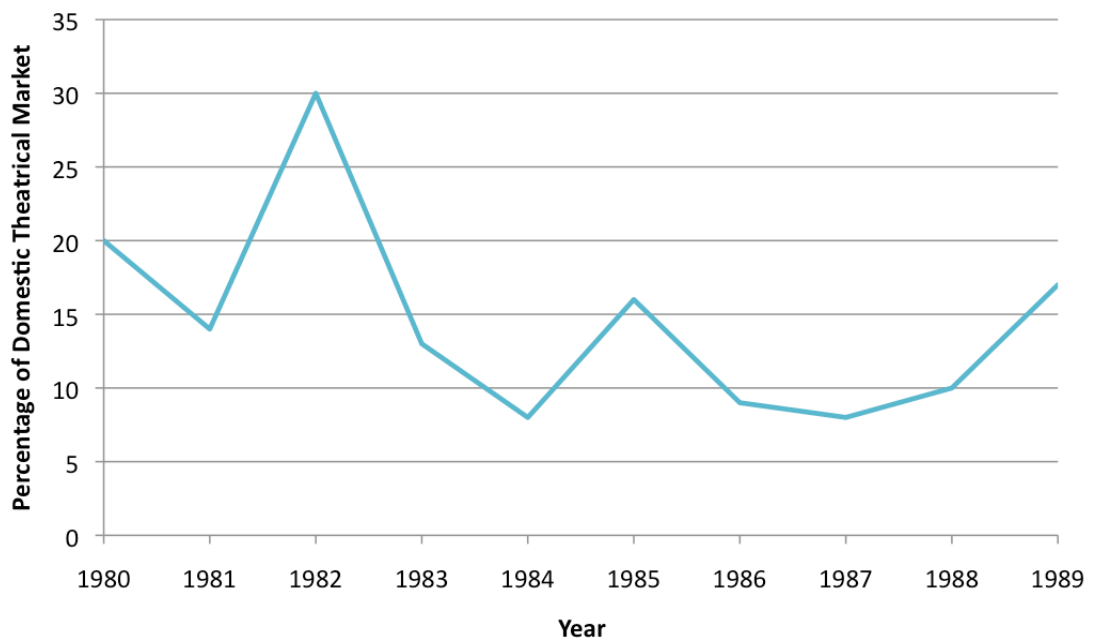
¹²⁹ Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 313.

office receipts earned by a single studio with receipts of \$290 million, generated by a roster of movies that included *The Blues Brothers* and *Smokey and the Bandit II*.¹³⁰ Two years later, the extraordinary success of *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) helped the company to secure an impressive 30% share of the theatrical market.¹³¹ After Ned Tanen's resignation in December 1982, Universal struggled to maintain its box office share (see Chart 2). Between 1980 and 1989, the studio's average annual box office share was 14.5%, placing it third after Paramount and Warner Bros. respectively (see Chart 3). However, as Charts 3 and 4 suggest, the volatility of the theatrical side of the movie business meant that all of the major studios experienced mixed fortunes at the box office during the 1980s.

¹³⁰ William Grimes, "Ned Tanen, movie executive with a taste for youth films, dies at 77," *New York Times*, 8 January 2009,

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/08/movies/08tanen.html?_r=0

¹³¹ A.D. Murphy, "North American Theatrical Film Rental Market Shares: 1970-1990," *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 12.

Chart 2: Universal's Share of the Domestic Theatrical Market (%) 1980 – 1989

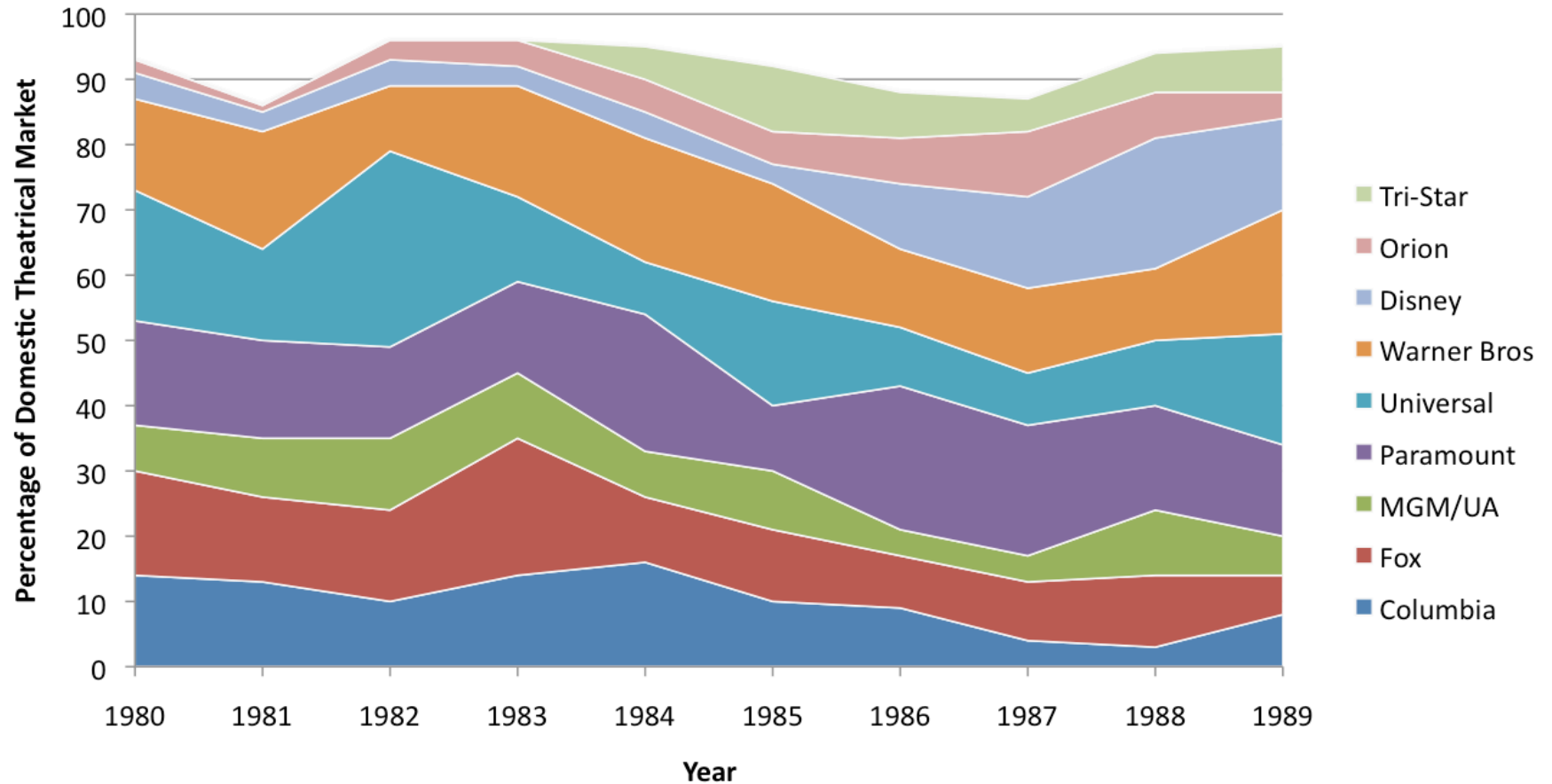
Data Source: A.D. Murphy "North American Theatrical Film Rental Market Shares: 1970-1990," *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 12.

Chart 3: North American Theatrical Film Rental Market Shares: 1980–1989

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Mean Average
Columbia	14	13	10	14	16	10	9	4	3	8	10.1
Fox	16	13	14	21	10	11	8	9	11	6	11.9
MGM/UA	7	9	11	10	7	9	4	4	10	6	7.7
Paramount	16	15	14	14	21	10	22	20	16	14	16.2
Universal	20	14	30	13	8	16	9	8	10	17	14.5
Warner Bros	14	18	10	17	19	18	12	13	11	19	15.1
Disney	4	3	4	3	4	3	10	14	20	14	7.9
Orion	2	1	3	4	5	5	7	10	7	4	4.8
Tri-Star					5	10	7	5	6	7	6.67

Data Source: A.D. Murphy "North American Theatrical Film Rental Market Shares: 1970-1990," *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 12.

Chart 4: Studios' Share of the Domestic Theatrical Market (%) 1980–1989



Data Source: A.D. Murphy "North American Theatrical Film Rental Market Shares: 1970-1990," *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 12.

During the early 1980s, Universal's parent company MCA developed a reputation as "a conservative company with an unusual continuity of management for an industry that trades in its executives about as frequently as it trades in its automobiles."¹³² In spite of the success of *E.T.*, the executives at Universal adopted a cautious attitude towards new projects, not least because executives wished to avoid a repeat of the anxieties caused by the escalating budget on *The Blues Brothers*.¹³³ In August 1982, Sidney Sheinberg, the company's president, stated, "MCA has a succinct philosophy about money... By and large, we're not comfortable with bank debt."¹³⁴ Hughes' projects, which could be made quickly and relatively cheaply, were a good match with the studio's production policy during the period. Furthermore, Ned Tanen's extensive knowledge of studio production and numerous contacts at Universal helped Hughes to navigate the business side of filmmaking. Prior to his departure from the studio, the producer developed a reputation as a hit maker. David A. Cook states that Tanen's appointment as Universal's head of production in 1970 was a major factor in Universal's turnaround during the following decade.¹³⁵ Drawing on his expertise, Tanen guided Hughes through the production process and often acted as negotiator between the filmmaker and Universal. Upon the release of *The Breakfast Club*, Hughes stated that Tanen's "ramming it through the studio system" and the executive producer's protection from studio interference had given him the freedom to make the movie he had envisaged.¹³⁶

Sixteen Candles was allocated an estimated budget of \$8 million, although later reports suggest that the project came in under \$6.5 million.¹³⁷ In a 1985 interview, Hughes stated that the final budget for *The Breakfast Club* was in the region of \$5 million.¹³⁸ While making these movies, Hughes and Tanen took advantage of various changes that occurred in the

¹³² Aljean Harmetz, "After *E.T.* They're 'chosen people' at Universal," *New York Times*, 25 August 1982, C17.

¹³³ Harmetz, 'After *E.T.* They're 'chosen people' at Universal,' C17.

¹³⁴ Harmetz, 'After *E.T.* They're 'chosen people' at Universal,' C17.

¹³⁵ Cook, *Lost Illusions*, 312.

¹³⁶ Gene Siskel, "John Hughes Wakes Up to Needs of Teens With *Breakfast Club*," *Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1985, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-02-17/entertainment/8501090893_1_sixteen-candles-writer-director-john-hughes-film.

¹³⁷ Lloyd Spence, "Chicago Screenwriter Makes His Directorial Debut," 54. Jack Barth suggests that the film's final budget was under \$6.5 million. Barth, "John Hughes: On Geeks Bearing Gifts."

¹³⁸ "Hughes to direct on *The Breakfast Club*," *PR Newswire*, Universal City, CA, 28 March 1984. LexisNexis Academic; Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows. However, Universal also had to cover the cost of purchasing the rights from A&M. Many online sources inaccurately state that the final movie was made for \$1 million.

film industry in Illinois during the 1980s. From 1984 onwards the Illinois Film Office took a more “aggressive” approach to attracting major Hollywood productions, focusing in particular on the financial benefits of shooting in the state.¹³⁹ In 1984 members of the film labour unions in Chicago agreed to substantial changes to their contracts, including more flexible working conditions and pay freezes.¹⁴⁰ The local workforce’s flexibility, according to the Director of the Illinois Film Office, ranked as “probably the biggest factor” in the growth of film and television production in Chicago.¹⁴¹ As *Back Stage* noted in 1987, “Cost-conscious movie moguls may be one of the reasons Chicago continues to attract an ample portion of the production pie...”¹⁴² Reduced labour costs, and other financial incentives, helped Tanen and Hughes to convince Universal to allow the filmmaker to shoot his movies in Illinois. As a consequence, Hughes shot *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*, and parts of *Weird Science*, on location in Chicago’s North Shore suburbs.

Although Hughes and Tanen managed to secure Universal’s funding for *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*, the filmmaker had to make additional compromises in his contract in order to retain control of the content of the movie: “I took scale [payment] so I could have complete creative control. I made myself a producer. I had casting approvals. I didn’t make any money on it, but I didn’t care. This was my baby.”¹⁴³ Despite making what would prove to be a significant financial sacrifice, Hughes was not immune to studio interference and there were various points of conflict between throughout the shoot, most notably when the movie looked likely to overrun the studio’s predicted schedule.¹⁴⁴ Towards the end of shooting on *The Breakfast Club*, Hughes had a major disagreement with the executives at Universal and threatened to leave the studio. According to Ned Tanen, “The only problem was that the administration changed at Universal and Frank Price and Marvin Antonowsky came to the studio.”¹⁴⁵ The studio’s attempt to force Hughes to edit the film

¹³⁹ “Illinois Film Office Enjoys Banner Year in ‘84,” *Back Stage*, 8 March 1985, 43; June Sawyers, “Famous Faces Who Call Chicago Home,” *Back Stage*, 24 May 1985, 10B.

¹⁴⁰ “Illinois Film Office Enjoys Banner Year in ‘84,” 43.

¹⁴¹ “Hot Chicago Film Scene Lures John Hughes Back Home,” *Back Stage*, 16 August 1985, 48.

¹⁴² Susan Shahoda, “Illinois Feature Film Update,” *Back Stage*, 20 February 1987, 55.

¹⁴³ Smith, “Teen Days That Shook The World.”

¹⁴⁴ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows. Smith, “Teen Days that Shook the World.”

¹⁴⁵ Smith, “Teen Days That Shook The World.” Aljean Harmetz, “Frank Price Named to Head MCA’s Universal Studio,” *New York Times*, 12 November 1983, 28.

in Hollywood rather than Chicago finally spurred him to take legal action.¹⁴⁶ Although Hughes was eventually released from his contract with Universal, he was obliged to direct a third movie, *Weird Science*, which he shot in Illinois and Hollywood, at the same time as editing *The Breakfast Club*.¹⁴⁷ Significantly, Ned Tanen was not involved in the project. Instead, Joel Silver, who owned the movie rights to E.C. Comics' *Weird Science*, produced the movie through his company Silver Productions. A project that Hughes later tried to distance himself from, *Weird Science* was a very different kind of movie to *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*. Whereas his first two teen movies focus on character and narrative, *Weird Science* is a much broader comedy, laden with special effects, including some computer generated imagery. The very fact that the budget for *Weird Science* has never been made publicly available offers some indication that the movie required considerably more investment from Universal than his previous films. From a commercial perspective, however, the movie did build on the lessons Hughes and MCA learnt through the exploitation of *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*, as will be discussed shortly.

Marketing Strategies and Product Differentiation

John Ellis suggests that the “mechanism of the narrative image” is “crucial to entertainment cinema” because “it offers a publicly circulating definition of a particular film” which aims to differentiate it from other films in the marketplace.¹⁴⁸ During the 1980s, a film’s “narrative image” not only differentiated the movie in the theatrical market, it also gave the film an identity in ancillary markets. Drawing in his experiences in advertising, John Hughes considered marketability when devising his projects. The plots for his films were topical and could be easily conveyed, visually and through text. In this respect, Hughes’ teen movies, “lend themselves to merchandising and marketing by their abstraction of a key image from the film...”¹⁴⁹ (as can be seen in Images 1, 2, 3]). Although Hughes tried to develop films with relatively wide appeal *within* the youth market, at this stage in his career he did not target a larger audience. Although publicity materials sought to differentiate *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* from other teen-oriented

¹⁴⁶ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows. Smith, “Teen Days that Shook the World.”

¹⁴⁷ Smith, “Teen Days That Shook The World.”

¹⁴⁸ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 30.

¹⁴⁹ Wyatt, *High Concept*, 19.

films, the marketing campaigns for the films focused almost solely on teenage audiences. Due to Hughes' lack of prior experience as a director and producer, he and Tanen had to negotiate with Universal over the content of the films' publicity campaigns. The format of various promotional materials suggests that Universal had the greatest influence over the content and emphasis of the marketing of the movies. The vast majority of the posters for movies distributed by Universal during this period follow a similar format to those devised for Hughes' teenpics, combining visual images of actors with plot outlines and at least one tagline. Universal's approach to poster design arguably lagged behind that of the marketing departments at the other major distributors. Paramount, Columbia, Warner Bros and Fox preferred to use striking visual images and prominent tag lines on their posters, eliminating any unnecessary text. Moreover, compared to other studios, Universal did not emphasise their studio "brand" in their posters. The studio logo is absent from the posters and the words "A Universal Picture" are almost hidden, positioned at the very bottom of the poster. The fact that the distributor dictated the how publicity materials would be presented does not undermine the fact that Hughes devised highly marketable movies.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 1 - U.S. Theatrical Release Poster for *Sixteen Candles*

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 2 - U.S. Theatrical Release Poster for *The Breakfast Club*

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 3 - U.S. Theatrical Release Poster for *Weird Science*

Universal's reluctance to defer to Hughes' instincts about the teenage market was particularly evident in the distributor's handling of the publicity for *The Breakfast Club*. The two parties clearly had divergent perspectives on what would appeal to adolescents. As one executive later put it, Hughes and the studio "were talking about very different movies."¹⁵⁰ When the final edit of *The Breakfast Club* was screened, the Universal executives' skepticism came to the fore. "They thought it was unreleasable," Ned Tanen later claimed.¹⁵¹ Neither Tanen nor Hughes were pleased with the promotional materials that Universal devised for *The Breakfast Club*. Hughes and Tanen were particularly unimpressed with the trailer, which includes the teenagers smoking and a mixture of comic moments, dancing and running, accompanied by a mixture of '80s synthesizer pop and guitar music in the style of Chuck Berry.¹⁵² This selective presentation of *The Breakfast Club*'s content was clearly an attempt by Universal to attract a wider audience. Presumably, the distributor was uncertain that teenagers would attend a largely serious dramatic movie. In an article that presented the movie as a "commercial risk", Gene Siskel observed, "the film is being incorrectly referred to in publicity releases as a comedy, possibly in the hope of luring the unsuspecting."¹⁵³ The distributor seemed somewhat reassured once test screenings had been conducted, however. One newspaper columnist noted that, "on the basis of research screenings, Universal executives are comparing the film's commercial prospects to *Animal House*."¹⁵⁴

Universal gave all three teen films a reasonably wide release in the domestic market, opening each film on over one thousand screens. In spite of mixed critical reviews, *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* performed moderately well at the U.S. box office. *Sixteen Candles* and *Weird Science* posted similar box office receipts, grossing \$23,686,027 and \$23,834,048 respectively. *The Breakfast Club* was by far the biggest success. The movie generated a box office gross of \$45,875,171 and ranked sixteenth in the annual box office chart.¹⁵⁵ The film's theatrical releases proved that Hughes' economic approach

¹⁵⁰ Smith, "Teen Days That Shook The World."

¹⁵¹ Smith, "Teen Days That Shook The World."

¹⁵² Smith, "Teen Days That Shook The World."

¹⁵³ Siskel, "John Hughes Wakes Up to Needs of Teens With *Breakfast Club*."

¹⁵⁴ Michael London (L.A. Times – Washington Post Syndicate), "Teen Movies Get Serious," *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, 17 November 1984, 6D.

¹⁵⁵ "*Sixteen Candles*: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=sixteencandles.htm>; "*The Breakfast Club*: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=breakfastclub.htm>; "*Weird Science*: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=weirdscience.htm>

to production and niche marketing strategy could help to ensure a decent return of the studio's investment. The key to Hughes' increasing power within the U.S. film industry, however, was his ability to create movies that could generate profits after their theatrical release in ancillary markets. During this period, states Stephen Prince, the majors increasingly preferred to invest in movies "...projected to perform well across theatrical and ancillary markets and from which they could reap the revenues accruing from cross-promotional and spin-off activities."¹⁵⁶ In the case of *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*, home video and recorded music were the main sources of additional revenue, generating significant returns for MCA and A&M Records.

MCA, Home Video and Youth Audiences

Like the rest of the major Hollywood studios, MCA/Universal reacted slowly to the rapid expansion of the home video market in the United States. MCA had unwittingly put itself at a disadvantage by investing heavily in the development of the video laserdisc through MCA DiscoVision. Despite the format's ability to store additional data and to reproduce higher quality images and sound than tape, it never achieved widespread appeal. In fact, MCA's initial concern about the time-shifting capabilities of home video technology led the company to pursue litigation against the manufacturers of videotape hardware. During the late 1970s, the corporation dedicated considerable resources to their lawsuit against Sony Corporation, the producers of Betamax recording equipment. The case, which was not fully resolved until 1984, reflects what Frederick Wasser describes as the "self-defeating" attitude of the Hollywood studios towards the proliferation of home video. During the period 1979 to 1985, notes Wasser, the major film companies tried to regain control of the video rental market through "contractual prohibition, partnerships and exclusive leasing, legislative exemption from first sale, and surcharges on the purchase price of cassettes."¹⁵⁷ By focusing on the negative aspects of home video and committing to costly litigation until the mid-1980s, MCA initially failed to make the most of the commercial opportunities videocassette presented as an outlet for Universal's films.

¹⁵⁶ Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 136.

¹⁵⁷ Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vendi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR*. p. 110

Sixteen Candles, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* were all released through MCA Home Video, a division that MCA had established in 1981.¹⁵⁸ *Sixteen Candles* came out on VHS and Betamax during October 1984, roughly five months after the movie's theatrical debut, and arrived on Laserdisc the following month.¹⁵⁹ In October 1985, eight months after the movie opened in cinemas, MCA launched *The Breakfast Club* on VHS and Betamax, issuing a Laserdisc the following month.¹⁶⁰ Prior to the video's release, *Billboard* listed *The Breakfast Club* amongst its "Hot Fall Titles" and predicted that the "youth-oriented" movie would have "strong fall legs."¹⁶¹ The video of *Weird Science* went on sale in February 1986, six months after the movie's theatrical release, and arrived on Laserdisc two months later.¹⁶² Although the major studios had started to experiment with sell-through pricing for major blockbusters, the home video market operated primarily on a rental model during the mid-1980s. Consequently, MCA priced the VHS and Betamax versions of Hughes' teen movies for the rental market, giving all three videos a price tag of \$79.95.¹⁶³ Consistent with the corporation's attempts to promote the disc format, Laserdisc versions of the movies were much cheaper to buy, with suggested retail prices of between roughly \$30 and \$35.¹⁶⁴

The official promotional materials that MCA Home Video circulated for the video releases of *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* replicated the publicity materials devised for the movies' theatrical releases. In line with broader industry trends, MCA did not heavily promote the home video release of *Sixteen Candles*. However, when MCA released *The Breakfast Club* on video in July 1985, they paid for several full-page advertisements in *Billboard*, which were aimed at video distributors and retailers. The extended time lapse between the movie's run in the theatres and the video release had evidently given the studio time to prepare a more high profile marketing campaign. The video also benefited from MCA's increased investment in the promotion of its home video

¹⁵⁸ Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vede, Video*, p. 96.

¹⁵⁹ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 20 October 1984, 27; "Top Videodisks," *Billboard*, 24 November 1984, 27.

¹⁶⁰ "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 12 October 1985, 34; "Top Videodisks," *Billboard*, 30 November 1985, 27.

¹⁶¹ "Hot Fall Titles," *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, VSDA-65.

¹⁶² "New Releases: Home Video," *Billboard*, 8 February 1986, 26.

¹⁶³ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 20 October 1984; "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 12 October 1985, 34; "New Releases: Home Video," *Billboard*, 8 February 1986, 26.

¹⁶⁴ MCA priced *Sixteen Candles* at \$29.98, *The Breakfast Club* at \$34.95 and *Weird Science* at \$34.98. "Top Videodisks," *Billboard*, 24 November 1984, 27; "Top Videodisks," *Billboard*, 2 November 1985, 33; "Top Videodisks," *Billboard*, 19 April 1986, 61.

division. The company developed a series of advertisements that bore the slogan “Everyone’s Watching MCA” and featured images of several current video releases. MCA Home Video’s claim that “variety gives us the edge” forms the main selling point of these advertisements, which boast, “Look to us for the brightest stars, the most popular titles and incredible musical performances.”¹⁶⁵ As Image 4 shows, the company included *The Breakfast Club* in this campaign, describing the movie as “one of the year’s biggest box office hits.”¹⁶⁶ To promote the video release’s chart success, MCA Home Video took out a full-page advertisement in *Billboard* on 16th November, which proclaimed, “Thanks to our sales staff and yours for making us the Number 1 for the 4th week in a row.”¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the publicity generated by the box office and music chart achievements of *The Breakfast Club*, in addition to the success of *Sixteen Candles* on video, also contributed to increased coverage of the video’s release in the press.

¹⁶⁵ “Everyone’s Watching MCA,” advertisement, *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, VSDA-51.

¹⁶⁶ “Everyone’s Watching MCA,”

¹⁶⁷ “Breakfast is Really Ready,” advertisement, *Billboard*, 16 November 1985, 27.

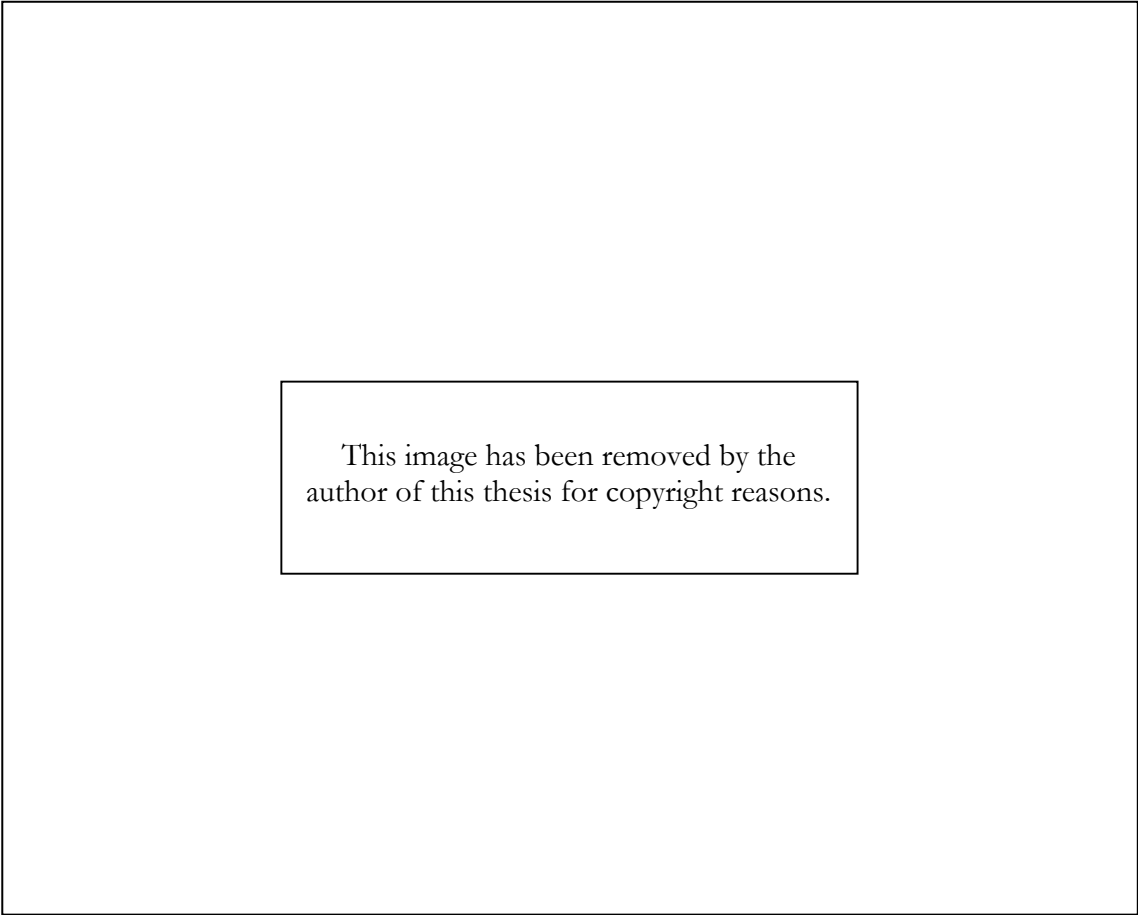
This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 4- “Everyone’s Watching MCA,” *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, VSDA-51.

The change in MCA Home Video's strategy reflects broader transformations in the home video market, most notably increased spending on the advertising of individual releases as well as promotion of the companies themselves. In this transitional period, when video producers were adjusting to the rapidly expanding market for VHS and Betamax, video distributors and retailers often devised their own marketing strategies to supplement publicity materials provided by the major studios. In a scenario where hundreds of video titles were competing for the consumers' attention, wholesalers and stores had to develop creative ways to make certain releases stand out. Hughes' teen movies were clearly suited to this form of "exploitation" marketing. For instance, a report in *Billboard* described how one video wholesaler, Sight & Sound Distributors, developed a sweepstakes promotion, which attracted 6,000 entries, to boost sales of *Sixteen Candles*. Described as one of the companies "most ambitious" campaigns, the contest required coordination of several hundred dealers and the in-house production of publicity and entry materials.¹⁶⁸ Two images included with the article depicted a sixteenth birthday cake that had been made for a presentation to the contest winner.¹⁶⁹ As can be seen in Image 5 the hand-decorated cake attempted to replicate the film's logo and the image of the movie's young stars used on the movie's poster. It also featured an approximation of the MCA Video logo.

¹⁶⁸ Earl Paige, "Distributor Ignites *Sixteen Candles*," *Billboard*, 22 December 1984, 41.

¹⁶⁹ Paige, "Distributor Ignites *Sixteen Candles*."



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 5 – “Helpful Hype,” *Billboard*, 22 December 1984, 41.

In August 1985, *Billboard* described how the owner of a small chain of video stores in Michigan had devised his own promotional campaign for the release of *The Breakfast Club*, as part of a larger series of “aggressive promotions that include private screenings, free meals and giveaways.”¹⁷⁰ To celebrate the movie’s video release, the retailer opened his store at 7 am and planned to give away free coffee mugs and vouchers for breakfast at a local restaurant.¹⁷¹ By promoting such localised marketing strategies, *Billboard* helped to share the expertise of successful home video businesses with a wider community of small and mid-size companies. During the early 1980s, video distribution companies also took responsibility for transferring knowledge between retailers. “The video distributors” argues Joshua M. Greenberg, “...acted as knowledge brokers and helped shape a shared consensus on how to market and sell movies on video cassette”¹⁷² For example, VTR Distributing, a mid-size video distributor based in Pittsburgh, held a brunch and seminar for *The Breakfast Club*. The event was part of larger series of seminars set up to explain to retailers how to market tapes and set-up promotions, as well as to supply them with additional advertising and point-of-purchase display materials.¹⁷³ Interestingly, as part of their publicity strategy for the release of *Weird Science*, MCA Home Video attempted to mimic the kinds of promotions that had been piloted by distributors and retailers earlier in the decade. During this period, Greenberg observes, “corporations were continually playing catch-up with the small business owners and enthusiasts who were creating the [video] industry...”¹⁷⁴ In January 1986, MCA announced a sweepstakes as part of the promotional campaign for the video release of *Weird Science*. Distributors, retailers and consumers were eligible for cash prizes and consumers could also win a two-week vacation in Europe.¹⁷⁵ MCA still did not take full responsibility for the video’s promotion at a store level, however. In order to encourage retailers to create their own prominent displays for the video release, MCA invited stores to send in photographs of their displays as entry to a competition for an Apple computer.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Fred Goodman, “How One Michigan Dealer Does His Best To Stand Out: Wagenaar’s Aggressive Promotions,” *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, 35.

¹⁷¹ Goodman, “How One Michigan Dealer Does His Best To Stand Out,” 35.

¹⁷² Joshua M. Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 14.

¹⁷³ Moira McCormick, “VTR Plans More Seminars: Distributor Meeting with Dealers,” *Billboard*, 21 September 1985, 34.

¹⁷⁴ Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, 7.

¹⁷⁵ Tony Seidman, “Newsline,” *Billboard*, 18 January 1986, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Seidman, “Newsline,” *Billboard*, 30.

Sixteen Candles, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* all proved to be popular rental titles.¹⁷⁷ *Sixteen Candles* entered the *Billboard* Top Videocassettes Rentals chart at Number 21, on 20th October 1984.¹⁷⁸ Showing considerable longevity, the video remained in *Billboard*'s Top Video Cassettes Rentals chart for twenty-seven weeks, finally dropping out of the Top 40 on 27th April 1985.¹⁷⁹ *The Breakfast Club* seized the top spot in *Billboard*'s Top Videocassettes Rentals chart on October 26th 1985, after just two weeks on the chart.¹⁸⁰ The video remained at Number 1 for four weeks, losing out to *Ghostbusters* on 23rd November 1985.¹⁸¹ *The Breakfast Club* stayed in *Billboard*'s rentals chart for 31 weeks.¹⁸² *Weird Science* entered the *Billboard* Top Videocassettes Rentals chart at Number 7 and remained in the rental Top 40 for twenty-one weeks.¹⁸³ The videos for all three teen movies ranked highly in annual rentals charts. *Sixteen Candles* placed 35th in *Billboard*'s 1985 Top Videocassettes Rentals Chart.¹⁸⁴ *The Breakfast Club* ranked third in the Video Software Dealers Association's Top Videocassettes Rental Hit Chart for the period August 17, 1985 to August 16, 1986, and was MCA's highest ranked title.¹⁸⁵ *Weird Science* placed at Number 46 in the same chart.¹⁸⁶ *Billboard* ranked *The Breakfast Club* 11th and *Weird Science* 40th in its 1986 Top Videocassette Rentals Chart, making the videos MCA's third and seventh highest entries.¹⁸⁷

Sixteen Candles, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* also performed relatively well in *Billboard*'s video sales charts. However, sales the chart only provides a crude indication of the sales performance of a Hollywood movie's video release because it included data for a

¹⁷⁷ During this period, *Billboard* had to base its weekly charts on sample rentals and sales data and, therefore, indicative rankings because it was not possible to collect reliable nationwide data. Although the trade journal normally indicates when videos exceeded certain revenue and sales targets, figures on actual sales and rental transactions are difficult to establish. Ultimately, the data presented in *Billboard* suggests the video's perceived success in the market, relative to other titles.

¹⁷⁸ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 20 October 1984, 27.

¹⁷⁹ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 20 April, 1985, 34; "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 27 April, 1985, 29.

¹⁸⁰ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 26 October 1985, 27.

¹⁸¹ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 23 November 1985, 28.

¹⁸² "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 10 May 1986, 60; "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 17 May 1986, 48.

¹⁸³ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 19 July 1986, 42; "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 26 July 1986, 42.

¹⁸⁴ "Top Video Cassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 28 December 1985, T-32.

¹⁸⁵ Paramount's *Beverly Hills Cop* was top of the chart with Vestron's *Prizzi's Honor* in second place. *Ghostbusters* and *The Karate Kid* were fourth and fifth respectively. "Top Videocassettes Rental Hit Chart," *Billboard*, 30 August 1986, V-78.

¹⁸⁶ "Top Videocassettes Rental Hit Chart," *Billboard*, 30 August 1986, V-78.

¹⁸⁷ "Top Videocassette Rentals," *Billboard*, 27 December 1985, Y-36.

heterogeneous range of releases. New movies were ranked alongside workout videos, wrestling tapes, concert recordings and catalogue film releases. These videos carried wildly varied price tags, ranging from \$9.95, for shorter videos, to \$89.95 for more specialist or prestigious titles. Even so, it is evident that Hughes' teen movies were popular purchases on cassette. *Sixteen Candles* entered the *Billboard* Top Videocassettes Sales chart at Number 31 and stayed in the Top 40 for 14 weeks.¹⁸⁸ *The Breakfast Club* posted a comparable performance in sales chart. The video entered the Top Videocassettes Sales chart at Number 22, on 12th October 1985 and remained in the Top 40 for 15 weeks.¹⁸⁹ In the period between 17th August 1985 and 16th August 1986, *The Breakfast Club* was MCA's third-most successful video release in the VSDA's Top Videocassettes Sales Hit Chart, placing 40th overall.¹⁹⁰ Getting off to a promising start, *Weird Science* entered the sales chart at Number 15 but quickly slipped down the rankings and dropped out of the Top 40 on 19th April 1986.¹⁹¹ The movie ranked 99th in the 1986 VSDA sales chart, but performed relatively well for a science-fiction title.¹⁹² In October 1986, *Billboard* published a special supplement on "Horror and Sci-Fi Video", genres which the publication described as "of the utmost importance to retailers" and likely to "achieve their greatest commercial success" on home video.¹⁹³ In the period 7th September 1985 to 6th September 1986, *Weird Science* was the 11th most rented horror/sci-fi film in the *Billboard* charts and the 13th highest selling horror/sci-fi video.¹⁹⁴ Overall, then, despite their \$79.95 price tags, the video releases generated relatively high sales volume, signalling John Hughes' ability to make movies that consumers wanted to own on cassette.

Reliable data on revenues from videos sales is extremely difficult to source, but industry "awards" and "seals" provide a further indication of the rental and sales figures and income generated by the teenpics. In February 1985, the International Tape/Disc Association awarded *Sixteen Candles* a Golden Videocassette Award for generating gross label revenue

¹⁸⁸ "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 20 October 1984, 29; "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 19 January 1985, 26; "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 26 January 1985, 34.

¹⁸⁹ "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 12 October, 1985, 34; "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 18 January 1986, 28; "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 25 January 1986, 31.

¹⁹⁰ "Top Videocassettes Sales Hit Chart," *Billboard*, 30 August 1986, V-72. *Back to the Future* (27th) and *Miami Vice* (35th) were the top two MCA releases.

¹⁹¹ "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 12 April 1986, 55; "Top Videocassettes Sales," *Billboard*, 19 April 1986, 62.

¹⁹² "Top Videocassettes Sales Hit Chart," *Billboard*, 30 August 1986, V-72.

¹⁹³ Chris McGowan, "Horror and Sci-Fi Video," *Billboard*, 4 October 1986, H-1.

¹⁹⁴ "Horror/Sci-Fi Vid Rental Review," *Billboard*, 4 October 1986, H-6; "Horror/Sci-Fi Vid Sales Review," *Billboard*, 4 October 1986, H-6

of \$1 million.¹⁹⁵ The video release later received the Recording Industry Association of America seal for “sales of/licensed rentals of 75,000 units or sales/licensed rental income of \$3 million.”¹⁹⁶ On 26th October 1985, *Billboard’s* video charts noted that the Recording Industry Association of America had awarded *The Breakfast Club* platinum certification, for “sales of 150,000 units or suggested list price income of \$6 million” after just three weeks in the Top 40.¹⁹⁷ After just a couple of weeks on release, the Recording Industry Association of America awarded *Weird Science* platinum certification for achieving “sales of 150,000 units or list price income of \$6 million.”¹⁹⁸ The fact that *Weird Science* apparently generated more income, at a much faster rate than *Sixteen Candles*, demonstrates the rapid growth of the video market during this period. While these indicators may be fairly crude, given the fact that *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* had already covered their production costs during their theatrical release, MCA undoubtedly profited financially from the video releases.

The significant overlap between VCR-owning households and Hughes’ target audience of relatively affluent suburban teenagers undoubtedly contributed to the success of the video releases of *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*. Average rental fees of \$3 or less during the early 1980s meant that renting a video was easily within the means of John Hughes’ primary audience of suburban adolescents and a cheaper alternative to attending the cinema.¹⁹⁹ Statistical measures of viewing habits seemed to confirm that young people embraced home video with particular enthusiasm. For instance, one survey suggested that viewers under the age of twenty “...tripled their video viewing to 58 million films in August-September 1985 while reducing their theatrical viewing by 20 percent.”²⁰⁰ The developing culture of video stores as spaces where teenagers could socialise and the central role that home entertainment played in slumber parties further added to video’s status within 1980s youth culture. This connection between Hughes’ product and his target audience did not go unnoticed by industry commentators. In *Billboard’s* ‘Newline’ column, Tony Seidman observed that *The Breakfast Club* “[makes] a superb match for the

¹⁹⁵ “34 Titles Get ITA Gold,” *Billboard*, 9 February 1985, 32.

¹⁹⁶ “Top Videocassettes Rentals,” *Billboard*, 9 March 1985, 36.

¹⁹⁷ “Top Videocassettes Rentals,” *Billboard*, 26 October 1985, 27.

¹⁹⁸ Tony Seidman, “Lennon Live is the First Music Title to Ship Gold,” *Billboard*, 22 March 1986, 39.

¹⁹⁹ Wasser, *Veni, Vedi, Video*, 101.

²⁰⁰ Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 97.

demographics of the VCR-owning audience” and stated that the movie looked set to be a “sure winner” on video.²⁰¹

Recorded Music, Synergy and MTV

During the 1980s, multiplex cinemas were, as Jim Hillier notes, “...often associated with shopping centres, exploiting the integration with other consumer and leisure activity.”²⁰² The decade also saw the growth of “mall culture” and the suburban shopping mall became the focal point of many adolescents’ social activities.²⁰³ Josh Stenger argues that these developments were connected:

Not coincidentally, multiplex theatres and youth markets were moving into the shopping mall at the same time: the mall and the multiplex became spaces for the mobilization of consumer desires, as well as dominant culture and political discourses which found voice and representation in the kind of mainstream films most likely to be exhibited in mall multiplexes.²⁰⁴

The mall was an architectural manifestation of the logic of synergy. For example, a consumer could watch a movie and then purchase the soundtrack album or single from a record store within the same mall complex. As producers of youth-oriented, mainstream entertainment, Hughes and the companies with whom he was affiliated were ideally positioned to take advantage of these cultural shifts in the United States.

During this period, MCA Inc., Universal Theatrical Motion Pictures’ parent company started to refocus its operations. The corporation focused in particular on synergies between Universal and MCA’s record and music publishing operations and gradually shed divisions unrelated to entertainment (such as its financial services and retail operations).²⁰⁵ As early as 1979, in a move that signaled renewed efforts to develop “properties” that could be sold across a range of markets, MCA Inc. outlined a business strategy that

²⁰¹ Tony Seidman, “Newline,” *Billboard*, 20 July 1985, 32.

²⁰² Jim Hillier, *The New Hollywood* (London: Studio Vista, 1993), 14.

²⁰³ Lisa Scharoun, *American at the Mall: The Cultural Role of a Retail Utopia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 70.

²⁰⁴ Josh Stenger, “Consuming the Planet: Planet Hollywood, Stars and the Global Consumer Culture,” in *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Thomas Schatz (London: Routledge, 2004), 351.

²⁰⁵ Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 11.

included a focus on “the development of music related films and developing new artists for soundtracks.”²⁰⁶ The business incentives were obvious. As Jeff Smith argues, “film and music cross-promotion can be seen more precisely as a strategy that not only creates multiple profit centres but also serves to spread risk and maximize resources.”²⁰⁷ In the case of MCA, this business strategy proved particularly beneficial in the early 1980s when, according to *Billboard*, Universal’s box office revenues helped to offset a decline in MCA Music’s record and cassette sales.²⁰⁸

The release of John Hughes’ teen movies coincided with the U.S. record industry’s emergence from a recession that had lasted several years. Young people spent more money on recorded music in the mid-1980s because their disposable incomes increased and cassette tapes offered a cheaper, more portable alternative to vinyl.²⁰⁹ Moreover, by the mid-1980s MTV wielded considerable influence over the culture and commerce of popular music and youth culture more generally. Hollywood’s interest in MTV as a promotional tool was undoubtedly fuelled by the access the channel gave the studios to their target audience. Admittedly, when compared to the networks, MTV did not have a huge audience, but MTV was the most viewed “basic” cable channel by mid-1984 and had access to a potential audience of 21.8 million viewers.²¹⁰ According to an October 1982 Nielsen profile, the average MTV viewer was young and affluent, with over half of the adult audience educated to college level.²¹¹ Access to this particular demographic profile was a boon because, in the 1970s, advertisers had struggled to target the twelve to thirty-four age bracket because they watched television relatively infrequently.²¹² As a consequence, the major studios were among 140 companies jostling for advertising time on MTV by mid-1983.²¹³

²⁰⁶ Jean Williams, “MCA Adds Three Labels in Accelerated Drive,” *Billboard*, 21 July 1979, 3.

²⁰⁷ Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 189.

²⁰⁸ “MCA Inc Hits Financial High,” *Billboard*, 20 November 1982, 4.

²⁰⁹ Jack Banks, *Monopoly Television: MTV’s Quest to Control the Music* (Oxford: Westview, 1996), 42.

²¹⁰ R. Serge Denisoff, *Inside MTV* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1988), 182.

²¹¹ Denisoff, *Inside MTV*, 100.

²¹² Banks, *Monopoly Television*, 32.

²¹³ Banks, *Monopoly Television*, 38.

During the early 1980s, a music video cost roughly \$50,000 to produce and MTV's advertising rates were relatively low, especially when compared to network television. Consequently, notes R. Serge Denisoff, "A short-form clip (three to four minutes) would quickly pay for itself in exposure and ad rates."²¹⁴ According to Denisoff, "Rather than packaging a sixty-second commercial, film companies focused on video clips, highlighting portions of the movies with potential hit songs."²¹⁵ Reassurance that promotion via MTV could reap substantial financial rewards came in the form of Paramount's 1983 hit *Flashdance*. The dance movie offered perhaps the most convincing demonstration of how MTV and Hollywood movies could cross-promote each other. The major Hollywood studios, as Jeff Smith notes, "were quick to recognize certain promotional advantages afforded by the so-called 'music trailer.'"²¹⁶ By the mid-1980s, Universal's executives saw soundtracks, music video and MTV as a central part of their business strategy. Following success of Ray Parker Jr.'s 'Ghostbusters', President of Universal Pictures, Frank Price, stated, "There's no question that music as a promotional tool for pictures is going to be around indefinitely."²¹⁷ The relatively conservative executives at MCA Records were, however, more reticent about exploiting cross-promotion. In particular, the record label remained sceptical about the commercial benefits of music television and was particularly resistant to giving clips to MTV for free.²¹⁸ The company soon fell in line with their competitors but tended to err on the side of caution in their dealings with the music channel.²¹⁹ As a consequence of MCA Records' conservatism, Universal tended to take the lead in creating cross-promotional opportunities.

Many other youth-oriented movies released in the 1980s tried to tap into contemporary music trends, but John Hughes' teen films were particularly successful at engaging with the popular cultural zeitgeist. All of the filmmaker's teenpics feature carefully selected pop music soundtracks that form an integral part of the aesthetic of the movies. Although he was a "baby boomer", Hughes clearly had an up-to-date knowledge of popular music, particularly genres that were popular on MTV during this period. A shortage of clips

²¹⁴ Denisoff, *Inside MTV*, 247.

²¹⁵ Denisoff, *Inside MTV*, 245.

²¹⁶ Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, 200.

²¹⁷ Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, 198.

²¹⁸ Denisoff, *Inside MTV*, 84.

²¹⁹ For example, when the idea of "pay for play" was mooted, MCA was cautious about any changes to the status quo because executives were concerned that MTV would prioritise major artists over new acts. Denisoff, *Inside MTV*, 145.

during the early 1980s meant that many of the artists featured on MTV were British post-punk and “New Pop” bands who were “well suited to a visual medium like MTV because they created visually provocative videos and constructed highly stylised images.”²²⁰ The genre was particularly associated with white, suburban youth. Compared to rock n roll’s “fantasy of the streets”, suggests Simon Frith, “New Pop” is “mall music, shiny and confined.”²²¹ Many of the bands were also much more amenable to the commercial emphasis of MTV. As Andrew Goodwin notes, “New Pop” acts played with “new understandings of the relations among music, image, and business that developed partly in reaction to the perceived “failure” of punk rock.”²²² It was primarily through these more commercially savvy bands that Hughes succeeded in connecting with his teenage audience.

Universal/MCA arguably underestimated the extent to which John Hughes’ teen movies could help to sell records and promote artists. Nor did they fully exploit the potential cross-over between his soundtracks and MTV. The theatrical version of *Sixteen Candles* had a soundtrack packed with a diverse range of bands, including AC/DC, Paul Young, Altered Images, David Bowie and The Specials. The soundtrack album for *Sixteen Candles*, which was released on vinyl and cassette through MCA records, contained just five songs. The album’s cover, which features the logo devised for the movie’s marketing materials and an image from the end of the movie, signaled its affiliation with the film. Unsurprisingly, given the absence of virtually all of the songs that featured on the film’s soundtrack, the album failed to chart in the *Billboard* 200. Part of the problem was that Hughes presumably had not considered whether MCA would be willing to meet the cost of acquiring rights to the songs on the movie’s soundtrack. By prioritizing the music on the theatrical release, presumably for creative reasons, Hughes created obstacles to the creation of a proper tie-in album release. He clearly learnt from this experience because all of his future soundtracks were conceived with both aesthetic and commercial priorities in mind.

The Breakfast Club features a far less eclectic soundtrack than *Sixteen Candles*, comprising an original score by Keith Forsey and a selection of new songs. The origins of *The Breakfast Club* meant that A&M records, who originally funded the project, retained the right to

²²⁰ Banks, *Monopoly Television*, 35.

²²¹ Simon Frith, “Frank Said: But What Did They Mean?” in *Consumption, Identity and Style: Marketing, Meanings and the Packaging of Pleasure*, ed. Alan Tomlinson (London: Routledge, 1990), 123.

²²² Andrew Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), 31.

produce and distribute the movie's soundtrack album. Crucially, A&M owned the rights for all of the tracks featured in the movie, which kept costs down. As well as excerpts from Forsey's score, the album featured all of the songs from the movie's soundtrack: "Don't You (Forget About Me)" performed by Simple Minds, "Fire in the Twilight" performed by Wang Chung, "We Are Not Alone" by Karla DeVito and "Didn't I Tell You", which featured Joyce Kennedy's vocals. However, the names of the artists featured on the soundtrack do not appear on the front of the LP. The cover simply features the movie's logo and the image of the cast used on the movie's poster.²²³ The back cover of the album includes images of each of the cast members, selected from Universal's official publicity stills. Presumably, A&M were confident that they could reach their target market of young consumers by selling the album primarily on its association with *The Breakfast Club*. In contrast, the label attempted to appeal to both fans of the movie and of Simple Minds by releasing "Don't You" on a 45 rpm single with two different covers – one version included the image of the soundtrack album and the other did not. The second single release, "Fire in the Twilight", was less subtle, prominently featuring images of the cast and the caption "From the Soundtrack of the Smash Film *The Breakfast Club*."

²²³ Admittedly, the cassette version of the album signals the inclusion of "Don't You" and "Fire in the Twilight."

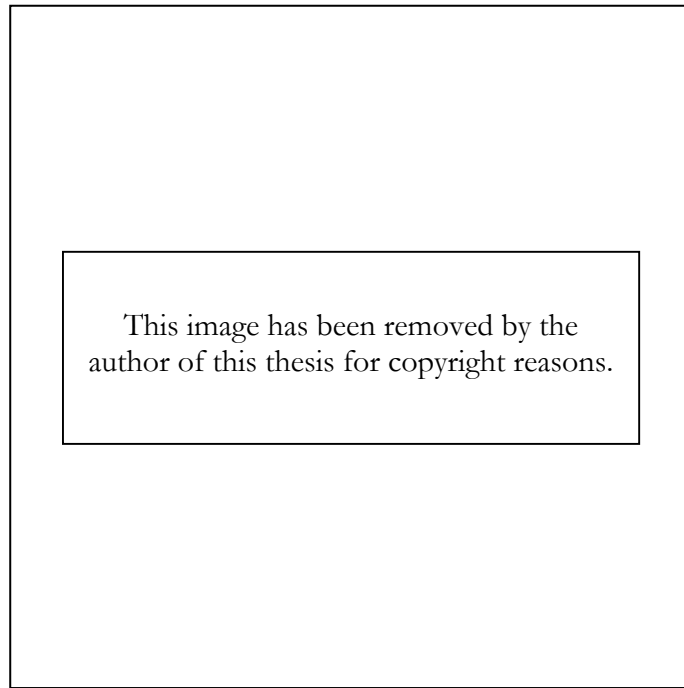


Image 6 – Front Cover of the LP and CD Releases of *The Breakfast Club* Soundtrack

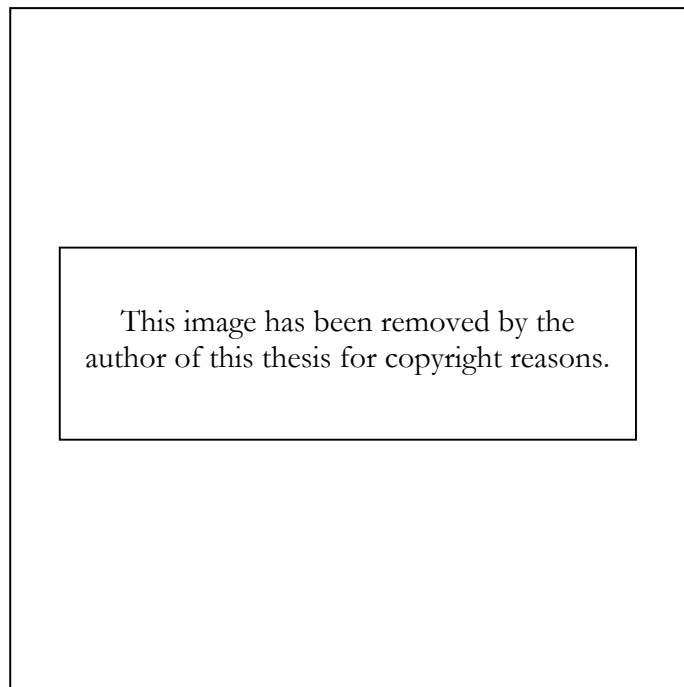
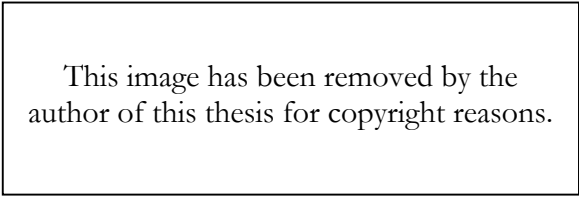
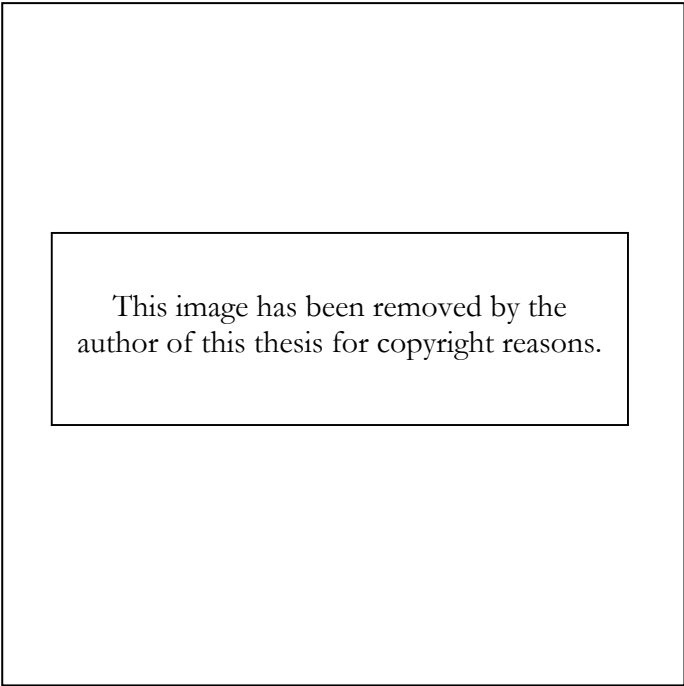


Image 7 - Back Cover of the LP and CD Releases of *The Breakfast Club* Soundtrack



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 8 – Cover of the Cassette Tape Release of *The Breakfast Club* Soundtrack



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 9 – Cover of the U.S. Single Release of “Don’t You”

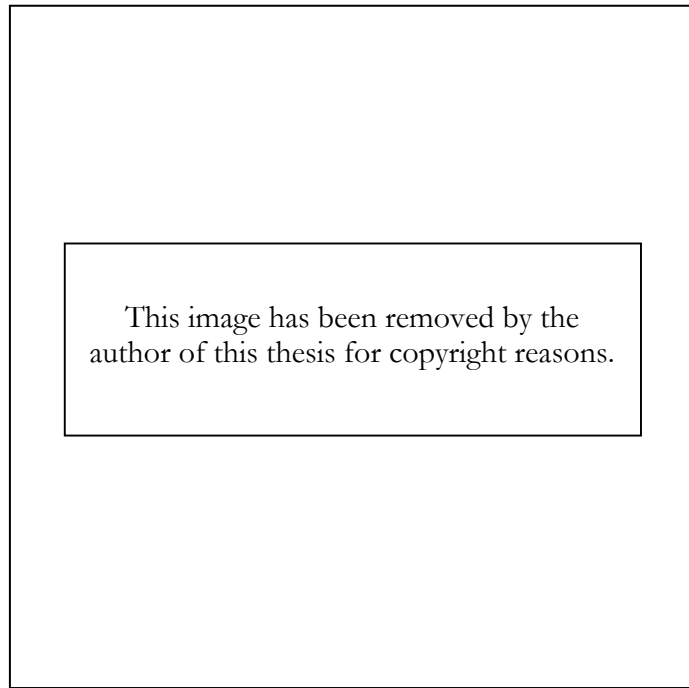


Image 10 - Cover of the U.S. Single Release of "Fire in the Twilight"

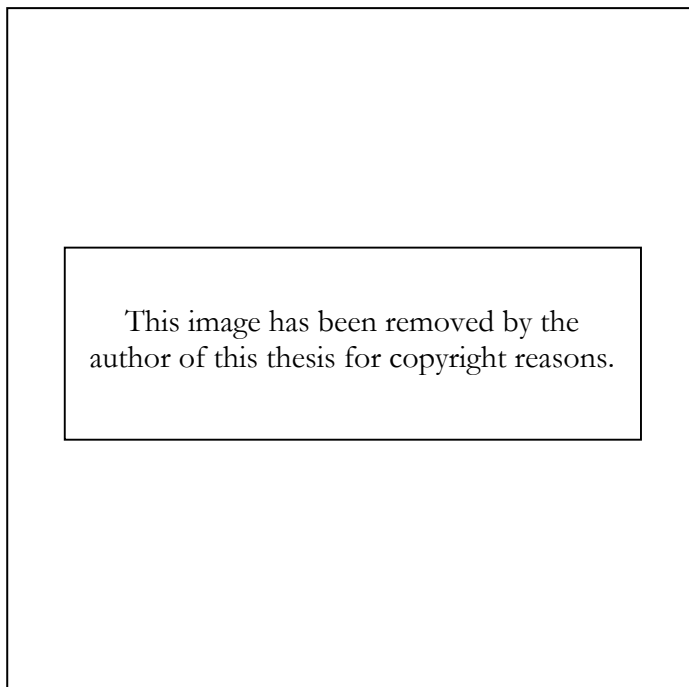


Image 11 – Cover of U.S. Promotional Single of 'Didn't I Tell You'

A&M Records invested considerable time and resources in the marketing of *The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* and the single release of “Don’t You” in the United States.²²⁴ During this period, A&M Records was still independent of a major corporation and had ambitions to forge partnerships with film production companies in order to share in the cross-promotional benefits created by linking music to movies. In order to promote the company’s association with *The Breakfast Club*, A&M took out a full-page advertisement (Image 12) in *Billboard* on 23rd February 1985 announcing that the movie’s soundtrack album was “The first A&M Records soundtrack from an A&M Films/Channel Production.”²²⁵ The advertisement features the movie’s logo and an image of the album cover, against a background that replicates the sketch featured on the reverse of the album. Aside from the movie’s title, the most prominent text on the poster is “Simple Minds: ‘Don’t You (Forget About Me)’”, cited as “the first single and MTV video.” Consistent with their desire to make *The Breakfast Club* and its soundtrack a commercial success, A&M invested more time and money into the album’s promotion than MCA had done with *Sixteen Candles*. Advertisements for the album appeared in numerous national publications. The record company also provided retailers with point-of-purchase materials to encourage them to display the album prominently. For example, A&M produced a small stand that could hold LPs that featured a cardboard cut-out of the cast in the pose from the movie’s promotional materials.

²²⁴ Virgin Records handled the release of “Don’t You” outside of the United States.

²²⁵ “*The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*,” advertisement *Billboard*, 23 February 1985, 7.

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 12 – Full page Advertisement for *The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*,
Billboard, 23 February 1985, 7.

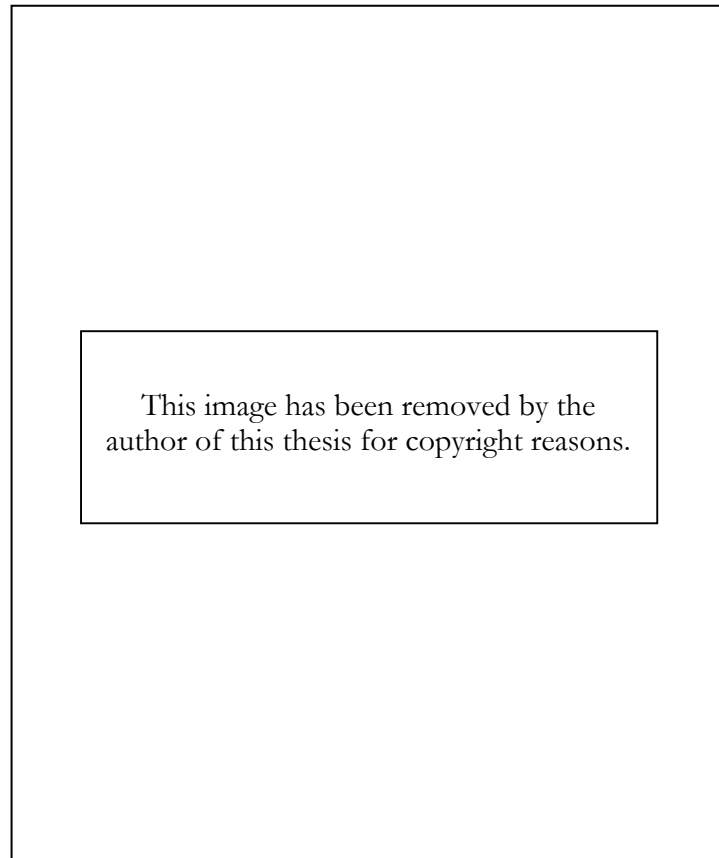


Image 13 - *The Breakfast Club* LP Display Stand

A&M also produced two music videos in order to promote “Don’t You” and “Fire in the Twilight”. By 1985, music videos were a standard part of record companies’ promotional strategies.²²⁶ The music videos for “Don’t You” and “Fire in the Twilight” featured on MTV’s playlists during 1985, making it through a relatively competitive selection process. Each week MTV executives selected the channel’s playlists from a selection of current videos and twenty or so new clips.²²⁷ A couple of weeks prior to the movie’s release, MTV debuted the video for “Don’t You” in the Breakout Rotation category on their playlist.²²⁸ By the time *The Breakfast Club* was in U.S. theatres, the video was on Medium Rotation and, in mid-March 1985, MTV promoted the track to Active Rotation.²²⁹ Simple Minds’ receipt of a spot on MTV’s Heavy Rotation list during May 1985 coincided with the single’s rise into the *Billboard* Top 10.²³⁰ After 18 weeks on the channel’s main playlist, MTV put the video into “recurrent” rotation, late in May 1985.²³¹ The content of MTV’s playlists from this period suggests that it was relatively rare for music videos to stay on the main playlist for more than ten weeks or so because the channel was keen to prioritise new releases. In contrast to the long playlist run enjoyed by “Don’t You”, Wang Chung’s “Fire in the Twilight” appeared on MTV for just a month. The music channel started showing the video during early April 1985, to coincide with the single’s release.²³² After just a month on Light Rotation, MTV removed the song from its playlist.²³³ Compared to many contemporaneous music videos, the clips for “Don’t You” and “Fire in the Twilight” are relatively subtle in their inclusion of images from the movie. Simple Minds’ video for ‘Don’t You’ focuses primarily on the band’s performance and the first reference to *The Breakfast Club* is almost half way through the video. A few brief excerpts from the trailer for the movie appear on small television screens during the video. These are prominent enough to signal the song’s association with the film, but do not disrupt the overall

²²⁶ Banks, *Monopoly Television*, 42.

²²⁷ Denisoff, *Inside MTV*, 128.

²²⁸ “MTV Programming as of January 26, 1985,” *Billboard*, 26 January 1985, 29. MTV’s Playlist Categories during the period were: Power Rotation, Heavy Rotation, Active Rotation, Medium Rotation, Breakout Rotation, Light Rotation and New.

²²⁹ “MTV Programming as of March 13, 1985,” *Billboard*, 23 March 1985, 31.

²³⁰ “MTV Programming: As of May 8, 1985,” *Billboard*, 18 May 1985, 32.

²³¹ “MTV Programming: As of May 22 1985,” 1 June 1985, 39; “MTV Programming: As of May 29, 1985,” *Billboard*, 8 June 1985, 41.

²³² “MTV Programming As of April 17 1985,” *Billboard*, 27 April 1985, 36.

²³³ “MTV Programming as of April 24 1985,” *Billboard*, 4 May 1985, 37; “MTV Programming as of May 1 1985,” 11 May 1985, 33; “MTV Programming as of May 8 1985,” *Billboard*, 18 May 1985, 32; “MTV Programming as of May 15, 1985,” *Billboard*, 25 May 1985, 34.

aesthetic of the video or distract from the band's onscreen performance. The music video for Wang Chung's "Fire in the Twilight" also features footage from the movie. The video climaxes with the arrival of the band's lead singer, Jack Hues, at a cinema showing *The Breakfast Club*. The sequence from the movie featuring the song appears on the screen and then is shown in reverse, with Hues casting a shadow on the screen. Molly Ringwald also makes a brief appearance in the video, reinforcing the relationship between the movie and the music video. By circulating images and sounds from the movie, music videos provided additional publicity for the film and reinforced the relationship between Hollywood cinema and popular music.²³⁴

²³⁴ Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, 200.

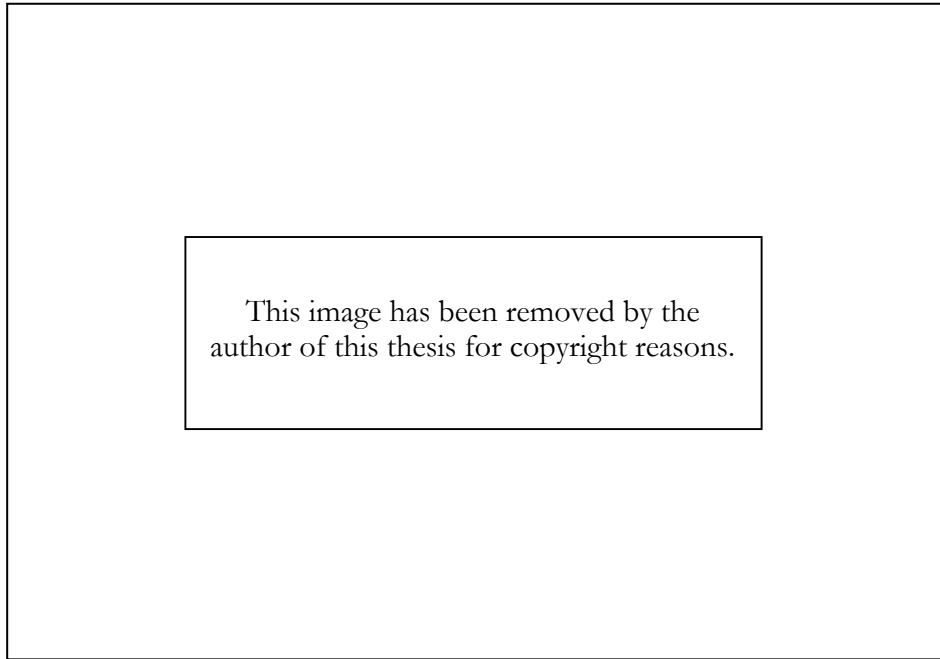


Image 14 – Music Video for “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”:
First shot that shows *The Breakfast Club* on a TV screen

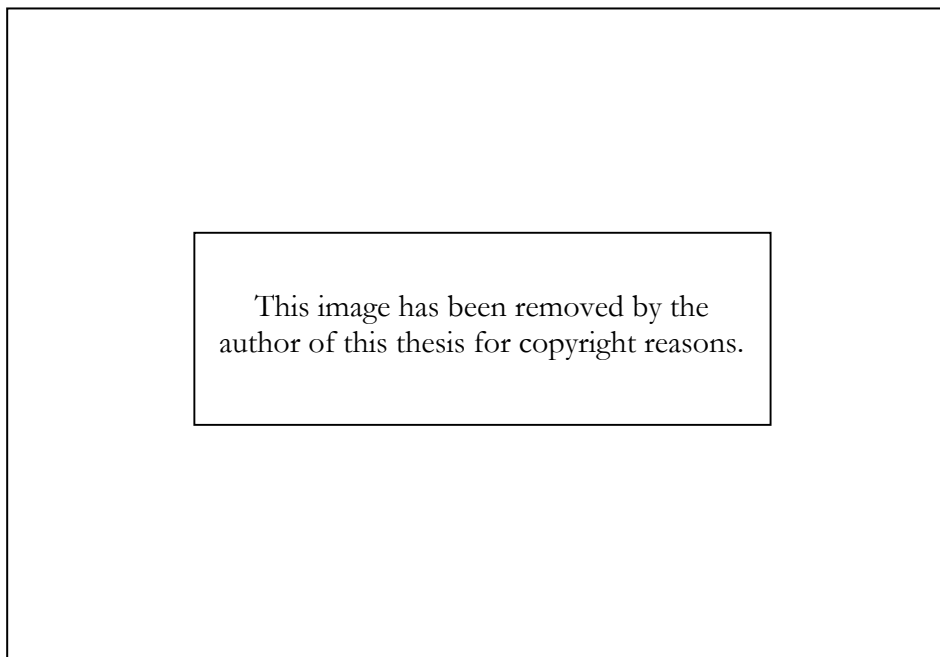
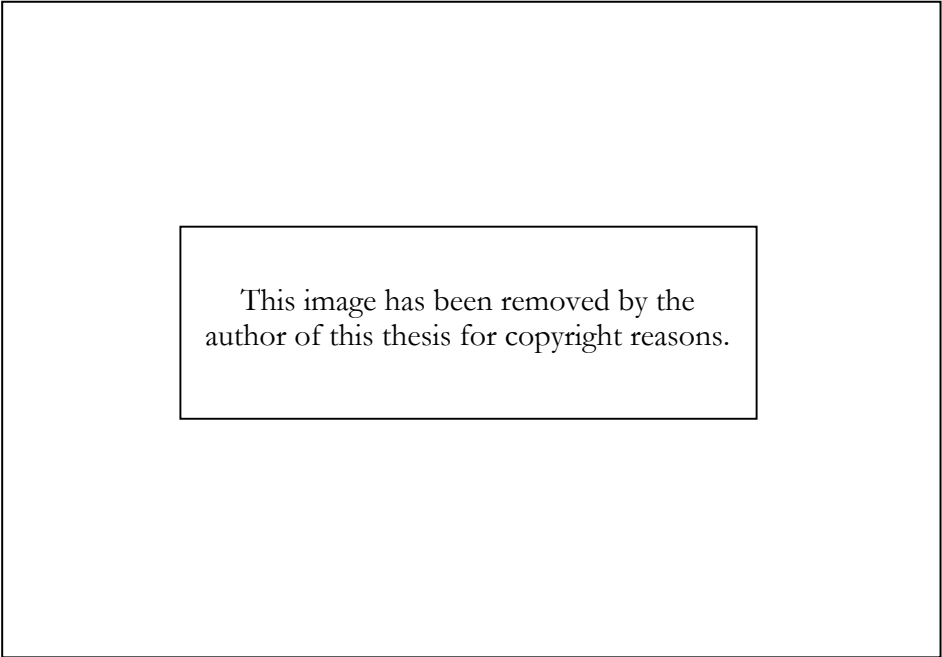
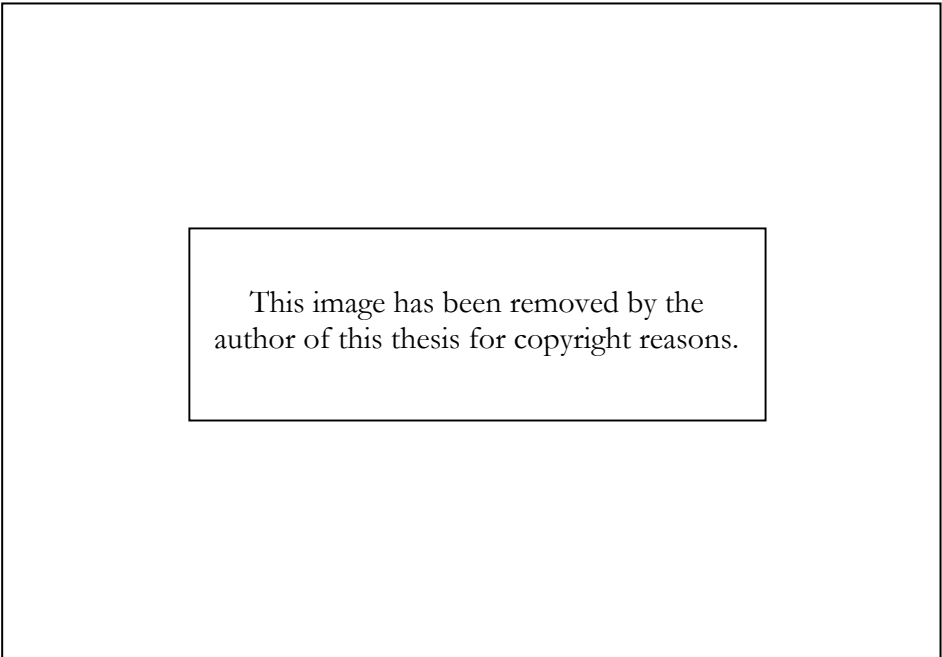


Image 15 – Music Video for “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”:
Swipe cut from close-up of TV screen to Jim Kerr



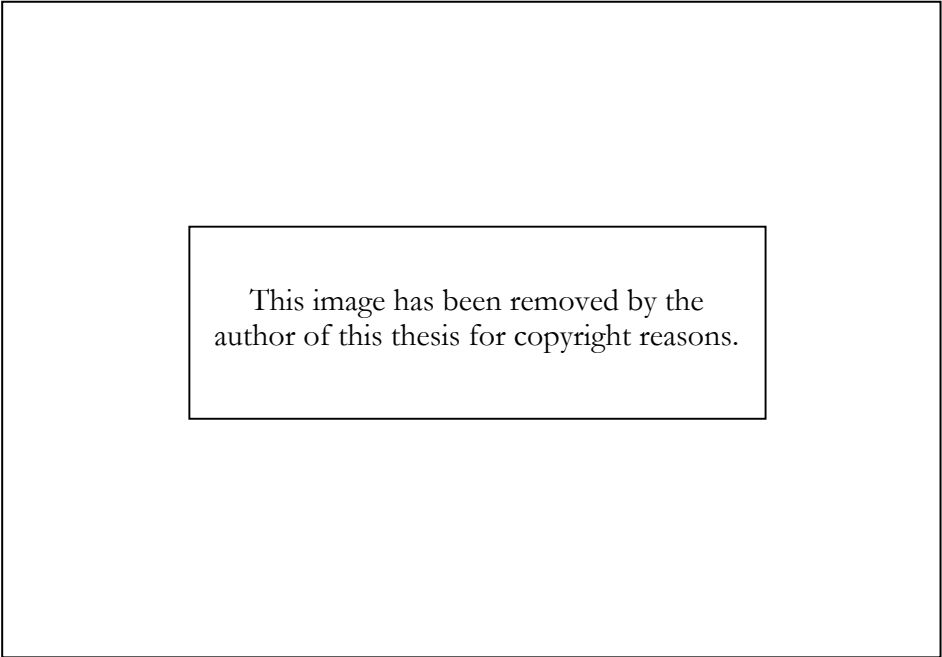
This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 16 – Music Video for “Don’t You (Forget About Me)”:
Pan across a row of TV screens



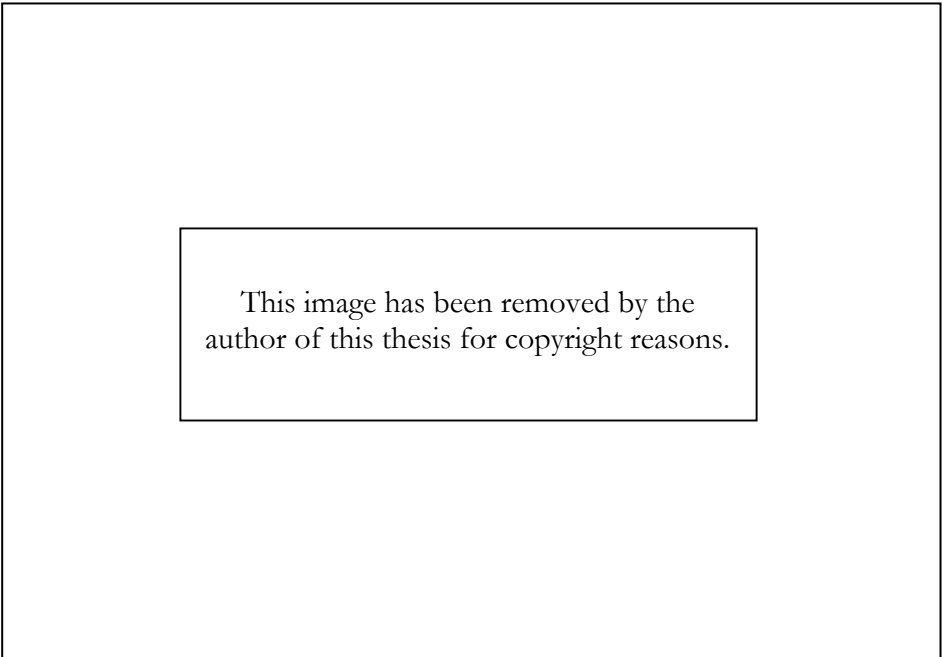
This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 17 – Music Video for “Fire in the Twilight”:
Jack Hues outside the movie theatre



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 18 – Music Video for “Fire in the Twilight”:
Jack Hues in front of the screen



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 19 – Music Video for “Fire in the Twilight”:
Molly Ringwald appears in the audience

A&M's investment in promotion soon paid off. Both *The Breakfast Club* and its soundtrack proved popular with American consumers, with each medium promoting the other. Released on February 19th 1985, a couple of days after the film debuted in theatres, *The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* sold well. The album remained in the *Billboard* Top 200 album chart for 26 weeks and peaked at No. 17.²³⁵ In the *Billboard*'s review of 1985, the publication ranked *The Breakfast Club* soundtrack 7th in its 'Top Pop Album: Soundtracks' chart and 100th in the 'Top Pop Albums Chart'.²³⁶ A&M released "Don't You (Forget About Me)" on February 20th 1985. The song reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 singles chart and remained in the chart for twenty-two weeks.²³⁷ The single was also an international hit, reaching the Top 10 Britain, Canada, West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Australia.²³⁸ In spite of its association with *The Breakfast Club*, "Fire in the Twilight" failed to break into the *Billboard* Hot 100, however. The single's lack of popularity served as a reminder that cross-promotion between movies and music did not guarantee chart success.

The trade press promoted the commercial success of "Don't You" as a triumph of the synergistic relationship between film and music and A&M Records proved extremely willing to participate in such coverage. For instance, *Billboard* printed photographs that depicted key record industry and film personnel celebrating the song's success. A photograph of A&M Records and Films President Gil Friesen and Simple Minds' Jim Kerr printed in *Billboard*'s "Newsmakers" section, drew attention to the single's commercial significance.²³⁹ Similarly, in June 1985, the publication printed an image of an event celebrating the chart success of the single, which depicted various executives and the song's co-writer posing with boxes of breakfast cereal (Image 20) Keith Forsey, the producer of "Don't You" and of the soundtrack album for *The Breakfast Club*, also received additional

²³⁵ "The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: Awards," *Allmusic*, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-breakfast-club-mw0000193096/awards>; "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 18 May 1985, 72; "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 25 May 1985, 80.

²³⁶ "Top Pop Album: Soundtracks/Original Cast," *Billboard*, 28 December 1985, T-22; "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 28 December 1985, T-19.

²³⁷ "The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: Awards." "Simple Minds: Chart History," *Billboard.com*, <http://www.billboard.com/artist/279405/simple-minds/chart>

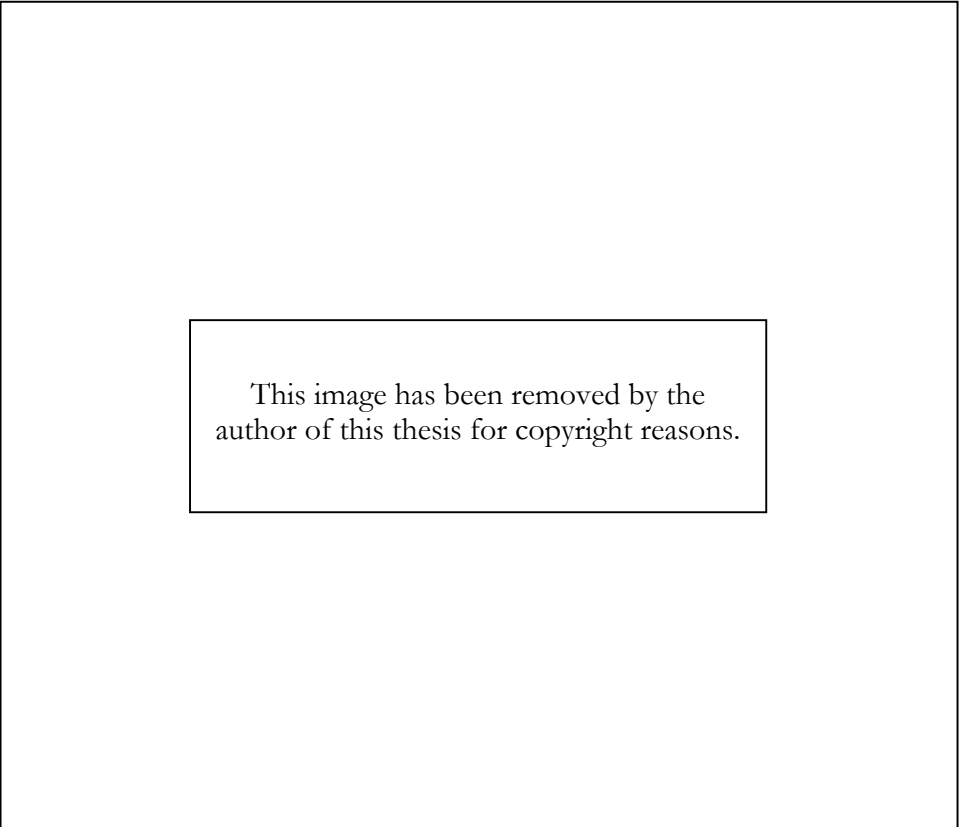
²³⁸ "Hits of the World," *Billboard*, 25 May 1985, 73; "Hits of the World," *Billboard*, 25 May 1985, 65.

²³⁹ "Newsmakers," *Billboard*, 13 April 1985, 8.

publicity following the song's release.²⁴⁰ While the entertainment industry may have been keen to promote the song's commercial achievements, Simple Minds were more restrained. According to *Billboard*, Jim Kerr, the band's lead singer, was less willing to give credence to the notion that the band's career had significantly benefited from their relationship with *The Breakfast Club*, even though "Don't You" was their first U.S. Number 1. When Simple Minds embarked upon their 1986 tour, he asserted that the band's increased popularity should be attributed to their "socially conscious" music rather than the success of 'Don't You'.²⁴¹ However, the fact that Simple Minds chose to perform the single at the Philadelphia leg of Live Aid demonstrates how the band's politics could not be easily disentangled from their commercial success.

²⁴⁰ Paul Grein, "Chart Beat," *Billboard*, 20 April 1985, 6; "Producer Keith Forsey," *Billboard*, 4 May 1985, 42.

²⁴¹ Ethlie Ann Vare, "Simple Minds Tours For Human Rights," *Billboard*, 12 April 1986, 26.



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 20 - *Billboard*, 22 June 1985, p. 76

In spite of its popularity, music critics apparently paid little attention to the soundtrack for *The Breakfast Club*. In his “Consumer Guide” on 25th June 1985, *Village Voice*’s Robert Christgau awarded the album a “D-“ and labeled it his “Must to Avoid” album, describing it as a “consumer fraud” filled with “utterly negligible songs.”²⁴² This perspective is consistent with the hostile view that many “serious” rock musicians and journalists took toward the music video and cross-promotion between pop music and other media, which they felt contributed to an increased emphasis on “visual imagery, packaging and media marketing.”²⁴³ Recognising the album’s appeal to its target audience, *Billboard* listed *The Breakfast Club* soundtrack among its “Pop Picks” and described the album as a “well-crafted pop/rock/dance soundtrack.”²⁴⁴ The trade publication also placed “Fire in the Twilight” on its “Recommended” list.²⁴⁵ As Andrew Goodwin points out, “pop has always stressed the visual as a necessary part of its apparatus – in performance, on record covers, in magazine and press photographs, and in advertising.”²⁴⁶ In this respect, Hughes’ movie soundtracks can be positioned within an established popular music culture that has always used performances to promote other commodities, most obviously recorded music.²⁴⁷

Presumably due to the commercial success of *The Breakfast Club*, the trade press showed more interest in the soundtrack for *Weird Science*. From July 1985 onwards, *Billboard* printed several updates on the progress of the recording of the *Weird Science* soundtrack.²⁴⁸ The publication linked the project to MCA’s efforts to develop Oingo Boingo’s commercial prospects after the band switched to the label during 1985, following five unsuccessful years at A&M.²⁴⁹ In an interview with *Billboard*, Danny Elfman, the band’s frontman, suggested that his ambitions to have a mainstream hit were supported by MCA’s view that, for all their quirkiness, the band were “right smack in the middle of centre.”²⁵⁰ *Weird Science* was not Oingo Boingo’s first foray into film music. As part of their management

²⁴² Robert Christgau, *Village Voice*, 25 June 1985, <http://www.robertchristgau.com/xg/cg/cgv6-85.php>

²⁴³ Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory*, 7.

²⁴⁴ “Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: The Breakfast Club,” *Billboard*, 23 February 1985, 66.

²⁴⁵ “Wang Chung: ‘Fire in the Twilight,’” *Billboard*, 20 April 1985, 68.

²⁴⁶ Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory*, 8.

²⁴⁷ Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory*, 28.

²⁴⁸ “Audio Track: Los Angeles,” *Billboard*, 20 July 1985, 24; “Audio Track: Los Angeles,” *Billboard*, 3 August 1985, 41; “Audio Track: Los Angeles,” *Billboard* 24 August 1985, 38.

²⁴⁹ Ethlie Ann Vare, “Oingo Boingo Aims for the Centre: Eclectic Troupe Moves to MCA,” *Billboard*, 10 August, 1985, 36.

²⁵⁰ Vare, “Oingo Boingo Aims for the Centre,” 36.

company's plan to increase their exposure, the band's music appeared on several movie soundtracks in the early 1980s, including teenpics such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *The Last American Virgin*.²⁵¹ The *Weird Science* soundtrack, however, placed the group centre stage. Oingo Boingo aside, the track listing for *Weird Science: Music from the Motion Picture* demonstrates that MCA's confidence in the viability of tie-ins for Hughes' movies had increased. The album includes some artists signed to MCA but also features performers affiliated with other record labels.

²⁵¹ Ethlie Ann Vare, "Beyond Video: Media Flips for Clips," *Billboard*, 28 September 1985, NT10.

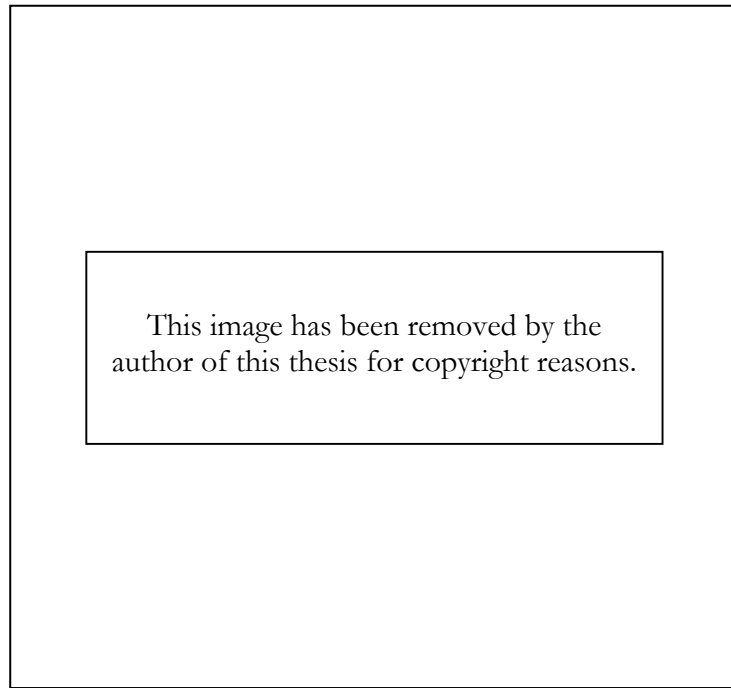


Image 21 – Front Cover of the LP and CD Releases of *Weird Science* Soundtrack

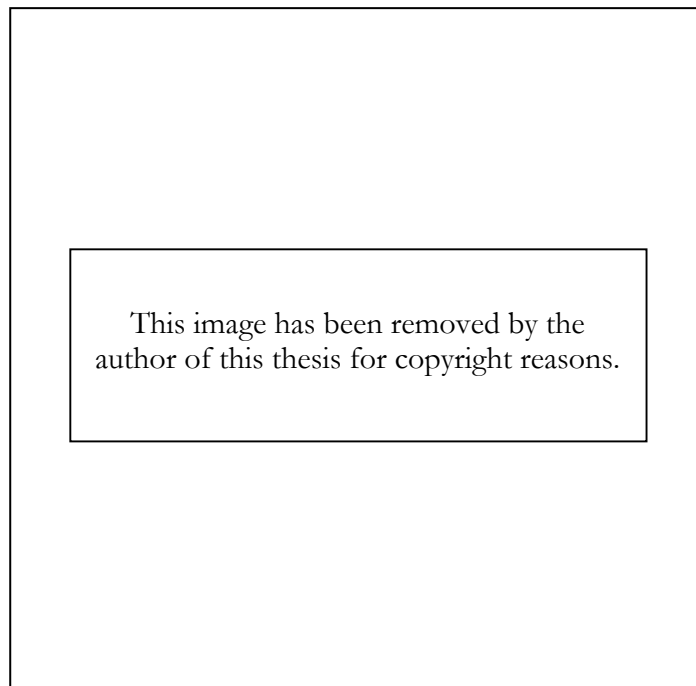
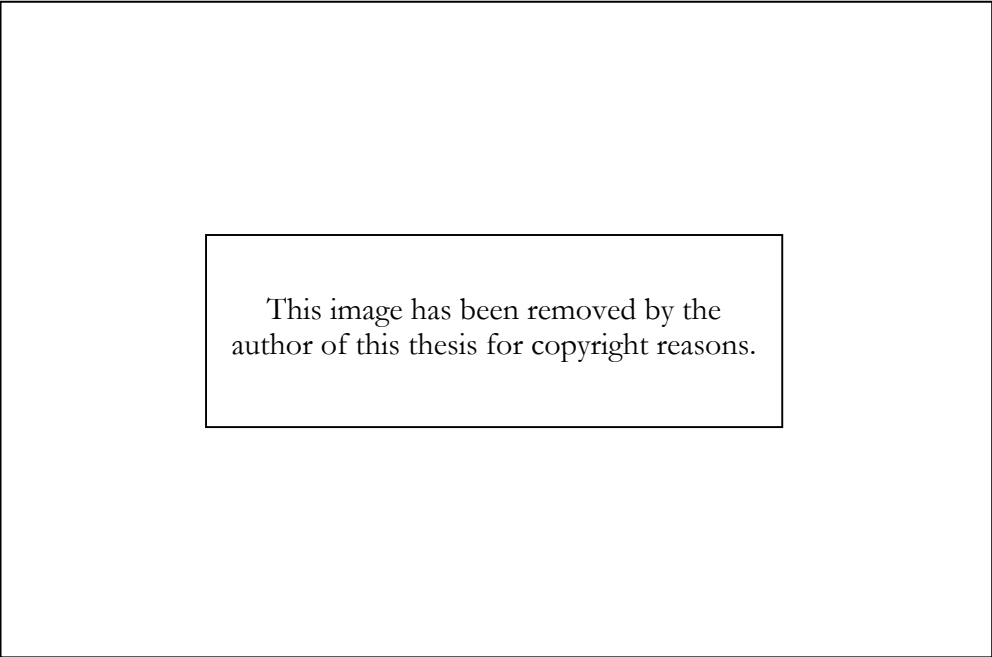


Image 22 - Front Cover of U.S. Single Release of "Weird Science"

The album's lack of visibility in publications such as *Billboard* suggests that MCA spent less on promoting the *Weird Science* soundtrack in than A&M had with *The Breakfast Club*. However, MCA strove to create a strong, consistent sense of brand identity through the tie-ins for *Weird Science*. The label ensured that the same bold imagery and logos were integrated into all products, as Images 21 and 22 demonstrate. Stephen Prince observes that, in order to signal a "common corporate identity", the "tie-ins between films and music videos often aimed to fuse production design, theme and characters in the two media. This fusion would operate like a brand label..."²⁵² The music video for Oingo Boingo's "Weird Science" makes extensive use of footage from the movie, in an overt effort to promote the film. The video begins with a clip from *Weird Science*, which features the central characters Gary and Wyatt and which also appears at the start of the movie's trailer. The video then zooms in on an image of Oingo Boingo that has been superimposed onto a computer screen. Visual excerpts from the film are interspersed into the video and the film's adult star, Kelly LeBrock, appears alongside Danny Elfman at the end of the video. The video also includes an excerpt from *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), of Dr. Frankenstein (Colin Clive) shouting "She's alive!", which is also used in the movie's trailer and the movie itself. Nonetheless, Oingo Boingo's video for "Weird Science" is conceptualized and Danny Elfman's performance style is physically expressive and stylized. The factory/warehouse set recalls the mise-en-scène of *The Bride of Frankenstein*, as well as the production design of Russian constructivist theatre. Moreover, dissolves and superimposition are used throughout the video. The visual clash between the "branded" elements of the video and its relatively unconventional aesthetic demonstrates how "Weird Science" negotiates the competing demands of creativity and commerce.

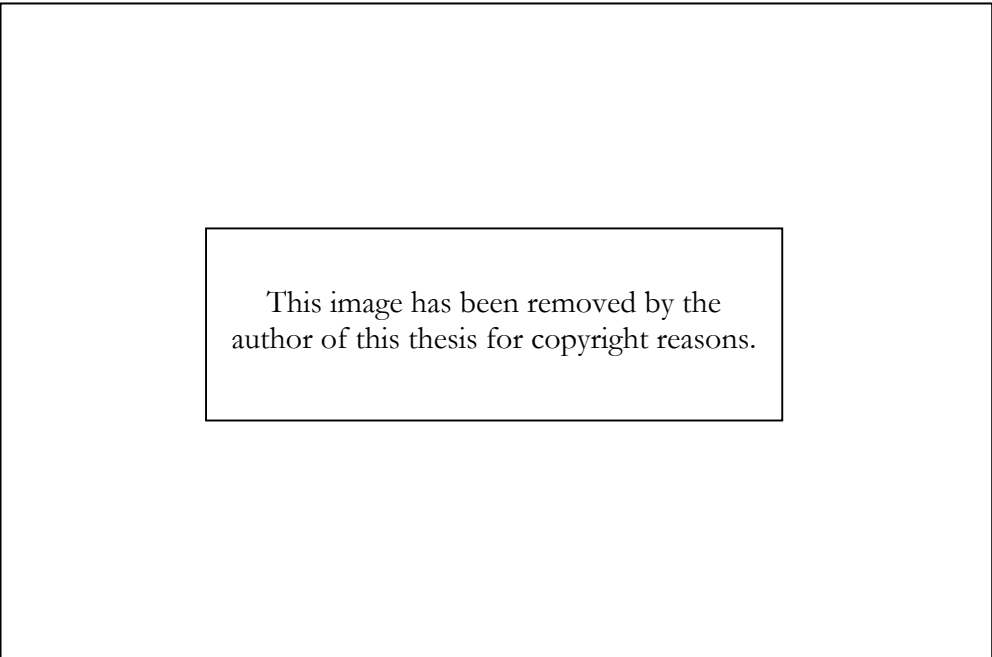
²⁵² Prince, *A New Pot of Gold*, 135.



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 23 – Music Video for “Weird Science”:

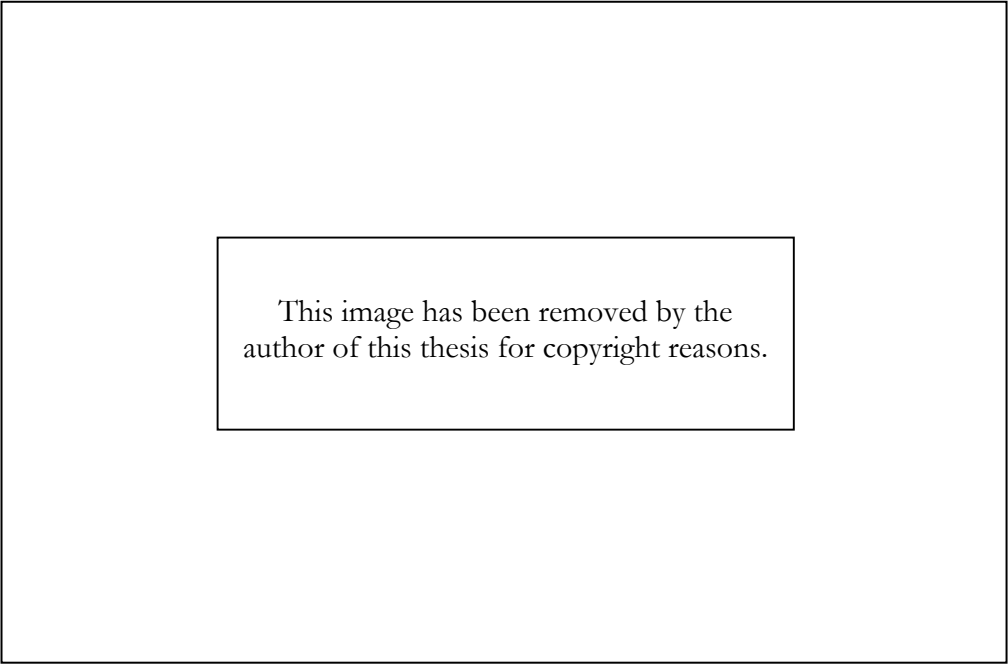
Opening shot, taken from *Weird Science*



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

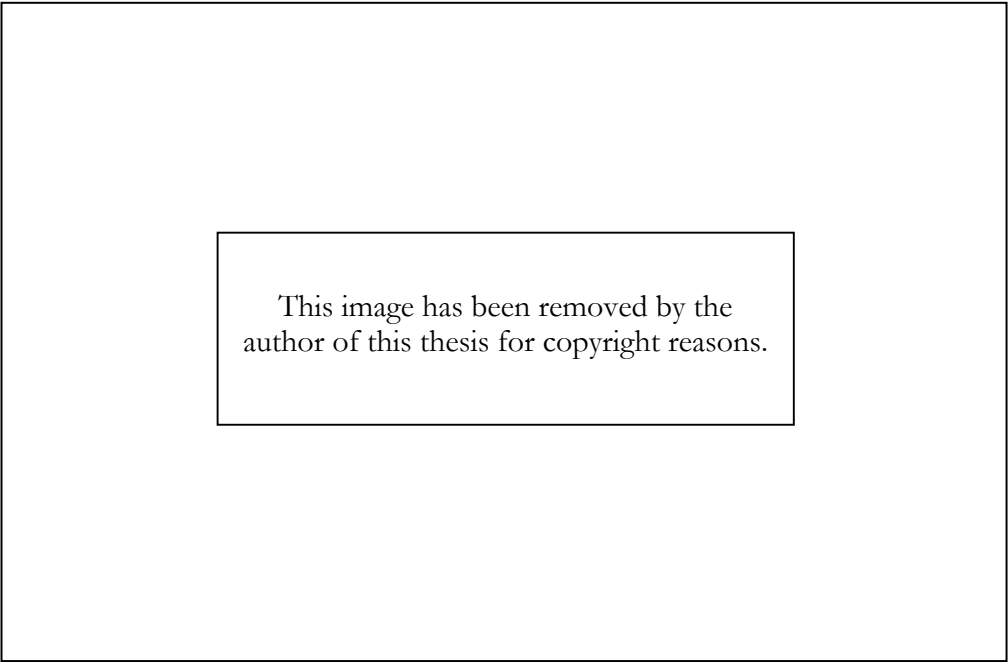
Image 24 – Music Video for “Weird Science”:

Example of inserted footage



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 25 – Music Video for “Weird Science”:
“Concept-led” style, superimposition and stylized performance



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 26 – Music Video for “Weird Science”:
Kelly LeBrock’s cameo

The music video for Oingo Boingo's "Weird Science" first appeared on MTV's playlist in early July 1984, providing the single, the album and the film with additional publicity.²⁵³ In late August 1985, to coincide with the single's release, MTV executives moved the single onto "Heavy Rotation", the channel's second highest playlist category.²⁵⁴ Whereas A&M released both *The Breakfast Club* soundtrack album and "Don't You" within a week of the movie's release, MCA did not release Oingo Boingo's single and the soundtrack album for *Weird Science* until a couple of weeks after the movie debuted in U.S. theatres. "Weird Science" entered the *The Billboard* Hot 100 Singles chart at No. 93 on 31st August 1985 and the *Weird Science Original Soundtrack* entered the *Billboard* 200 Pop Album Chart at 184.²⁵⁵ The single peaked at No. 45 in the *Billboard* Hot 100 and dropped out the chart on 16th November 1985, after just twelve weeks on release.²⁵⁶ The album, which peaked at No. 105, dropped out of the *Billboard* 200 Pop Album Chart the same week, by which time Oingo Boingo had a new album on sale. *Dead Man's Party* included a different version of "Weird Science", offering Oingo Boingo's fans the opportunity to buy the song alongside the band's other new tracks.²⁵⁷ In a *Billboard* article debating the benefits and drawbacks of the "current soundtrack craze", Larry Solters, an executive at MCA Records, argued that inclusion on the *Weird Science* soundtrack helped to bring Oingo Boingo to a "national audience," beyond their established fan base in Los Angeles.²⁵⁸ Indeed, the staying power demonstrated by the music video for "Weird Science", which remained on MTV's playlist until late October 1985 despite the single's lack of commercial success, suggests that the band and the video's appeal exceeded the movie and the song itself.²⁵⁹

While he was under contract at MCA, John Hughes started to explore how the soundtracks for his movies could help to promote new and lesser-known bands. Through his association with popular music hits, particularly "Don't You", Hughes demonstrated to the entertainment industry that he could develop movie packages with substantial synergistic

²⁵³ "MTV Programming: As of August 21, 1985," *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, 52.

²⁵⁴ "MTV Programming: As of August 28, 1985," *Billboard*, 7 September 1985, 33.

²⁵⁵ "Hot 100 Singles," *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, 60; "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, 87.

²⁵⁶ "Hot 100 Singles," *Billboard*, 19 October 1985, 86; "Hot 100 Singles" *Billboard*, 16 November 1985, 64.

²⁵⁷ "*Weird Science: Motion Picture Soundtrack: Awards*, *Allmusic*,
<http://www.allmusic.com/album/weird-science-mw0000320764/awards> "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 16 November 1985, 73.

²⁵⁸ Steve Gett, "Soundtrack Craze: Mixed Reviews," *Billboard*, 23 August 1986, 4.

²⁵⁹ "MTV Programming: For Week Ending October 26 1985," *Billboard*, 26 October 1985, 41; "MTV Programming: As of October 23," *Billboard*, 2 November 1985, 46.

potential. While there were clear commercial benefits to this strategy, Hughes' in-depth knowledge of popular music, which came to the fore in interviews during the mid-1980s, contributed to an impression of both expertise and subcultural legitimacy. Hughes often expressed enthusiasm for popular music, demonstrating a particular interest in British groups. He declared that his favourite bands of all time were The Beatles and The Clash, and noted that Bob Dylan and John Lennon were his "heroes" during adolescence.²⁶⁰

While rock music critics remained suspicious of Hughes' commercial motives, a November 1985 interview with the filmmaker in *Rolling Stone* indicated that the music press had noticed his growing influence on American popular music. The music publication described him as "a frustrated guitarist" who was "among Hollywood's hippest directors," and positioned him alongside Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, as well as Gary LeMel, the Head of Music at Columbia who supervised the soundtracks for *The Big Chill* and *St. Elmo's Fire*.²⁶¹ Hughes explained how his creative process was designed to realize a "complete symbiosis" between the narrative and the soundtrack. He stated that his screenplays were "written to the style of a couple of bands", noting that *The Breakfast Club* was from his "Clash-Elvis Costello period."²⁶² The emphasis Hughes placed on listening to records and on his knowledge of older rock groups suggests an attempt to gain legitimacy amongst rock fans by appealing to the discourse of authenticity associated with rock music. In an August 1985 interview, Oingo Boingo's Danny Elfman stated that Hughes was "one of the only guys out there who really takes chances musically," in contrast to the majority of "film people" who "know nothing about music, and their tastes are three or four years behind wherever the music scene is."²⁶³ In the *Rolling Stone* interview, Hughes also attempted to suggest his contempt for crude attempts to capitalize on soundtrack releases. He lamented Hollywood's apparent disregard for the appropriateness of soundtrack selections, proclaiming, "You can't just have Bob Dylan scoring *Peewee's Big Adventure*."²⁶⁴ This comment might seem somewhat disingenuous, given the highly commercial nature of Hughes' soundtracks. However, as Pierre Bourdieu observes, the "antieconomy" of cultural production is underpinned by a "disavowal of commercial interests and profits"

²⁶⁰ "Molly Ringwald Interviews John Hughes," *Seventeen*, Spring 1986.

²⁶¹ Rob Tanenbaum, "The Sound of Money: Soundtracks Thrived in the Summer of '85," *Rolling Stone*, 21 November 1985, 17.

²⁶² Tanenbaum, "The Sound of Money," 17.

²⁶³ Ethlie Ann Vare, "Oingo Boingo Aims for the Centre," 36.

²⁶⁴ Tanenbaum, "The Sound of Money," 17.

that seeks to create economic value through the realization of “symbolic capital.”²⁶⁵ Hughes interactions with the popular music press and with music industry personnel suggest a conscious effort to assert his musical knowledge and position his soundtracks as genuine attempts to convey the subjectivity of youth experience through music.

Conclusions

John Hughes clearly drew on the experience he had acquired as an advertising executive during the early stages of his career. His awareness that a movie’s theatrical release was simply part of a larger process of commercial exploitation of films as brands enabled him to take advantage of transformations in the U.S. film industry. The commercial exploitation of *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science* in ancillary markets showed that modestly-budgeted films with relatively limited target audiences could still generate substantial profits. They demonstrated that, if planned and handled correctly, synergies were possible outside of the high-risk realm of blockbuster production. While the major studios were often slow to react to changes in audiences’ consumption habits during the early 1980s, Hughes demonstrated an astute understanding of how teenage audiences consumed media. He recognized that home video should be treated as an important part of a film’s commercial lifecycle, rather than as an afterthought. His youth-oriented movies were an excellent match for the clientele of the video stores that spread across America during the early part of the decade. Histories of home video have tended to focus on the major studios and to orient their accounts so as to suggest a linear progression towards the “consolidation” of the market in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a consequence, relatively little attention has been paid to how home video retail and marketing operated during the early to mid-1980s. Moreover, few studies have considered exactly how particular video titles were positioned in the heterogeneous home video marketplace and the role that video distributors and retailers played in this process. My discussion of the home video releases of John Hughes early teen films shows how, during this period, video distributors and retailers marketed titles using strategies that evoked the “exploitation” strategies used by cinema exhibitors in previous decades. Acting as intermediaries, these small businesses arguably exerted greater influence over the positioning of videos in the

²⁶⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 75.

marketplace than the major studios, who seemed relatively disinterested in home video until 1985.

Like the so-called “MTV movies” of the same period, Hughes’ movies helped to reinvigorate the longstanding relationship between teen-oriented movies and popular music culture. *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*, in particular, were ideally positioned to take advantage of growth in the recorded music market during the early to mid-1980s. Hughes also understood that the relatively new format of the music video could help to promote his films relatively cheaply and effectively. However, the process of translating his ambitions into reality was not a straightforward process, especially because his commercial credentials were not yet secure. My exploration of MCA’s handling of the soundtracks for Hughes’ movies suggests that the differing agendas of the film studios and record labels often hindered cross-promotion. As my research on *The Breakfast Club* shows, the legal complexities of certain production and distribution deals meant that one conglomerate did not always own the rights to exploit a movie in other markets. At the same time, A&M’s promotion of *The Breakfast Club* soundtrack and associated singles indicates that certain record companies were keen to enter into deals with major studios. Their expertise and resources arguably helped to maximise sales of the album and the single release of “Don’t You”. These case studies illustrate the need to think more critically about how “synergy” operated in specific instances.

Hughes obviously understood popular music culture and, after the cross-promotional success of *The Breakfast Club* and “Don’t You”, his “insider” knowledge about music trends became part of his reputation within both the film and music industries. His ability to compile soundtracks that were fashionable, or sometimes ahead of mainstream trends, quickly became a major selling point for his movies, differentiating them from many other contemporary films. Via interviews in media outlets aimed at a youth demographic, Hughes attempted to maintain a certainly level of credibility as a music fan. In a 1986 interview with MTV, the filmmaker maintained that he was more interested in the music than in the potential synergies afforded by his movie soundtracks. When referring to the relationship between “Don’t You (Forget About Me)” and *The Breakfast Club* he asserted, “...we didn’t put the song in there to sell records. We put the song in there because it was part of the movie. You couldn’t take that song out of the movie and you couldn’t take the movie out

of the song. That's what I try to do, not sell records."²⁶⁶ By directly addressing his youth audience through the music channel, Hughes demonstrated awareness of his target market and reinforced the "cool" image that he had cultivated in interviews and through his work. My discussion of Hughes' role in the creation and positioning of his soundtracks shows the need to think about the cultural processes involved in selling movie soundtracks.

Once he moved into directing and producing, Hughes' increased control over his movies and more extensive press coverage of his career allowed him to commence the cultivation of a "signature product." Hughes recognized that there was no obvious "dominant brand" within the teen film market and sought to capitalize on the absence of competition. In response to an apparently overlooked demand for alternatives to the majority of teen-oriented cinema, Hughes created a form of differentiated product that catered for a notional audience of suburban adolescents. Significantly, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, he tried to address younger teenagers and girls through his films. By controlling key aspects of the production and promotion of his movies, including casting and the appointment of key personnel, he was able to ensure consistency across his projects. His repeated use of Anthony Michael Hall and Molly Ringwald allowed him to develop their star images, potentially adding to the value of his future projects, while keeping costs down. The team of collaborations that he developed helped him to transition into the next phase of his career. Although Hughes had successfully developed his signature product, through *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*, he had yet to prove whether his brand identity was "expandable", or whether his association with the teen film would prevent him from appealing to a wider audience. The next chapter considers how, during the late 1980s, Hughes sought to capitalize on the status and expertise that he had acquired during his time at Universal, while dealing with the challenges of extending his appeal.

²⁶⁶ "John Hughes Musical Legacy" *MTV*, August 6, 2009 [1986], <http://www.mtv.com/videos/movies/425382/john-hughes-musical-legacy.jhtml>

Chapter Two

“The Creative Producer”:

John Hughes, Synergy and Late 1980s Hollywood

Hughes’ career from the mid-1980s onwards demonstrates how the industrial set-up of New Hollywood enabled producers to develop their own brand images through their movies. In March 1985, Hughes signed a contract with Paramount Pictures Corporation.²⁶⁷ Ned Tanen, who had become President of Paramount Pictures during early October 1984, was instrumental in attracting Hughes to the studio.²⁶⁸ In an upbeat press release that confirmed the deal, Frank Mancuso, the chairman and CEO of Paramount stated:

John Hughes is a boundless talent, and we are exceptionally pleased to welcome him to the Paramount family of filmmakers. I am particularly delighted that we can provide a home-base for John to further his collaboration with Ned Tanen, with whom he has so successfully worked in the past.²⁶⁹

In a move that signalled an expansion of Hughes’ commercial interests and the formation of a distinct “John Hughes” brand, the pact allowed the filmmaker to produce movies through his own unit, The John Hughes Company. Hughes soon adjusted his business operations to accommodate the scope of his ambitions and, in the autumn of 1985, he restructured and expanded his production company to create Hughes Entertainment. The vice president of Universal Studios, Michael Chinich, became head of the company in October 1985, alongside John Hughes as chair.²⁷⁰ Chinich’s acceptance of the post offered a clear indication that industry insiders felt confident about Hughes’ move into production. Without doubt, Hughes was poised to become one of the most powerful producers in Hollywood. His commercial savvy and ability to think in terms of marketability certainly placed him at an advantage within Paramount’s set-up during the mid-1980s.

Paramount had a relatively diverse output when Hughes formed his alliance with the studio. Both Janet Staiger and Richard Maltby have argued that the brand identities of

²⁶⁷ “Hughes in deal with Paramount,” *Screen International*, 30 March 1985, 4; “Hughes Signs to Paramount,” *PR Newswire*, New York, 21 March 1985, LexisNexis Academic.

²⁶⁸ Aljean Harmetz, “Tanen to Head Paramount Film Unit,” *New York Times*, 9 October 1984, C14.

²⁶⁹ “Hughes Signs to Paramount.”

²⁷⁰ “Chinich switches to Hughes Ent,” *Screen International*, 19 October 1985, 41B.

individual studios became less clearly defined, following the shift to the package-unit system.²⁷¹ During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Paramount developed a variety of modestly-budgeted mainstream comedies and dramas, as well as critically acclaimed films, such as *Terms of Endearment* and *Ordinary People*, and lucrative blockbusters, including the *Star Trek* and *Indiana Jones* franchises. However, as Paul Grainge notes, “The majors have the industrial muscle to be more varied in their project investments, but this does not preclude the accretion of brand style in specific moments, and around particular film cycles.”²⁷² A cycle of youth-oriented movies with popular music soundtracks, including *Saturday Night Fever*, *Grease*, *Flashdance* and *Footloose*, provided the clearest distillation of Paramount’s brand and approach to mainstream filmmaking during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Undoubtedly, these movies reflect how the concentration of power within a small elite of executives ensured consistencies between Paramount’s projects and aided the development a studio brand.

Under the direction of Chairman Barry Diller, a former television executive, Paramount overhauled its approach to the business of filmmaking. Diller was representative of a new breed of studio head. As a 1977 *New York Times* feature described it, “The day of the almighty mogul is over. Now moviemaking is in the hands of packagers and budget-watchers who are the hired hands of the conglomerates who own the studios.”²⁷³ With Diller at the helm, Paramount refined its strategies in various areas of the movie business. The ability to “identify and exploit a particular market segment”, as Justin Wyatt notes, underpinned many of the studio’s projects.²⁷⁴ Paramount executives devised more cost-effective ways to sell movies to specific groups, for instance by buying TV spots on local television stations rather than the national networks and by using MTV to attract youth audiences.²⁷⁵ At the box office, the studio performed consistently well, topping the annual rentals chart in 1978 and placing second for the following four years.²⁷⁶ The studio was also

²⁷¹ Staiger, “The Package-Unit System,” 332; Richard Maltby, “Nobody Knows Anything: post-classical historiography and consolidated entertainment,” in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, eds. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), 31.

²⁷² Paul Grainge, *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2008), 83.

²⁷³ Robert Lindsey, “The New Tycoons of Hollywood,” *New York Times*, 7 August 1977, SM4.

²⁷⁴ Wyatt, *High Concept*, 104.

²⁷⁵ Sandra Salmans, “Barry Diller’s Latest Starring Role,” *New York Times*, 28 August 1983, F9.

²⁷⁶ Salmans, “Barry Diller’s Latest Starring Role,” F9.

at the forefront of experimenting with sell-through pricing for home video releases of major blockbusters.²⁷⁷ In 1983, the *New York Times*' Sandra Salmans claimed, "Mr. Diller has built what is widely regarded as perhaps the best-run, most stable and most consistently successful movie company in Hollywood."²⁷⁸

Diller and his team aggressively pursued synergies between movies, television and other products. "I want to be in the rights business in everything... Rights are programs, programs are ideas and ideas are value," he asserted in August 1983.²⁷⁹ However, the main barrier to Diller's ambitions seemed to be Gulf + Western's overly diversified conglomerate structure. During the 1980s, motivated by the stock market's emphasis on "opportunities for synergistic gain", leaders of the entertainment corporations embarked upon "a quixotic search for corporate synergies that have proved elusive more often than not, resulting in a cycle of perpetual restructuring..."²⁸⁰ Gulf + Western divested subsidiary companies that bore little relation to their entertainment holdings and formed partnerships with other media businesses. The concentration of media ownership in the United States, as Jennifer Holt notes, was facilitated by "the partisan nature of anti-trust enforcement and media regulation, along with the many interconnected political and economic imperatives of Reagan's policies."²⁸¹ Fortunately for the entertainment conglomerates, the Reagan administration championed corporate growth. For instance, during 1986 Gulf + Western purchased three theatre circuits for an estimated \$300 million, in an attempt to reinstate vertical integration.²⁸² Although the Justice Department undertook an investigation, the Supreme Court ruled that Gulf + Western, as well as MCA and Columbia, had not broken anti-trust law by purchasing theatre chains.²⁸³ In spite of an ostensible relaxation of Federal restrictions and Wall Street's support for corporate streamlining, the restructuring of Gulf + Western was a gradual and complex process, which occurred against a backdrop of various changes in management.

²⁷⁷ Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video*, 132–133.

²⁷⁸ Salmans, "Barry Diller's Latest Starring Role," F1.

²⁷⁹ Salmans, "Barry Diller's Latest Starring Role," F9.

²⁸⁰ Adam Leaver, "A Different Take: Hollywood's Unresolved Business Model," *Review of International Political Economy* 17, No. 3, August 2010, 463.

²⁸¹ Jennifer Holt, "In Deregulation We Trust: The Synergy of Politics and Industry in Reagan-Era Hollywood," *Film Quarterly* 55, No. 2, Winter 2001, 22.

²⁸² Andrew L. Yarrow, "The Studios' Move on Theatres," *New York Times*, 25 December 1987, D1, D10.

²⁸³ Prince. *A New Pot of Gold*, 84.

John Hughes joined Paramount during a period of transition, following the departure of a large number of executives. Reflective of their status as “Hollywood’s Hottest Stars”, the sudden departure of Barry Diller, Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg from Paramount caused a significant stir not only in the trade press but also in mainstream publications. In fact, *New York* magazine dedicated a seven-page feature to exploring the intrigue that surrounded “the liveliest Hollywood drama since *Indecent Exposure*.”²⁸⁴ Frank Mancuso, Paramount’s only senior executive based in Gulf + Western’s New York offices, emerged from the episode as Chairman of Paramount. Mancuso’s appointment was, stated Gulf + Western’s Chairman Martin Davis, consistent with plans to make the corporation “a marketing driven company across the board.”²⁸⁵ Although Diller, Eisner and Katzenberg were widely credited with engineering the studio’s success in the early 1980s, Mancuso and Dawn Steel, Paramount’s Head of Production, were instrumental in the development of strategies for the marketing and commercial exploitation of movies. While Mancuso had little influence over production agendas, he had been in charge of the distribution of Paramount’s movies and had developed a reputation as “one of Hollywood’s best marketing experts.”²⁸⁶ Steel, who had joined the studio as Director of Merchandising in 1978 and quickly moved up the ranks to become Head of Production in 1980, played a central role the development of marketing tie-ins for Paramount’s movies.²⁸⁷ Evidently, with his background in advertising and proven ability to develop marketable movies, John Hughes suited the approach to filmmaking championed by Paramount’s new leadership. Moreover, his proclivity for modestly-budgeted movies also fit with Mancuso’s relatively conservative approach to production financing.²⁸⁸

In spite of expectations to the contrary, Mancuso did not radically alter Paramount’s business strategy and continued to pursue opportunities for cross-promotion between films and other media. According to Justin Wyatt, during this period, “The [major studio’s] attempts to maximize synergy between different media were matched... by the drive to focus and target moviegoers through the differentiated product of high concept

²⁸⁴ Tony Schwartz, “Son of Hollywood’s Hottest Stars,” *New York*, 8 October 1984, 43.

²⁸⁵ Martin Davis, quoted in Tony Schwartz, “Son of Hollywood’s Hottest Stars,” 44.

²⁸⁶ Aljean Harmetz, “Frank Mancuso Named Chairman of Paramount,” *New York Times*, 13 September 1984, C17.

²⁸⁷ Bernard K. Dick, *Engulfed: The Death of Paramount Pictures and the Birth of Corporate Hollywood* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 176–178.

²⁸⁸ Charles Champlin, “On the Lot With Frank Mancuso, New Age Mogul,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-09-10/entertainment/ca-2671_1_frank-mancuso.

[movies].”²⁸⁹ A 1984 article in *New York* magazine explained how Paramount approached the business of moviemaking from this perspective:

The studio bases its choices less on the timeliness of the subject matter or the ability to attract big-name stars than on the concept – the story itself stripped of other considerations. A concept – or high concept, as its come to be known – refers to an idea that can be summarized in a sentence. And then sold to anyone over the age of seven.²⁹⁰

Scholars have, however, offered varying interpretations of how innovative high concept was and to what extent it influenced Hollywood cinema as a whole. Justin Wyatt, author of *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Contemporary Hollywood*, describes high concept as “perhaps *the* central development” within “post-classical cinema.”²⁹¹ However, as David Bordwell observes, based upon Wyatt’s definition, “the high-concept style covers only a fraction of Hollywood’s output” and best describes a “particular 1980s production cycle”.²⁹² Wyatt also overstates the novelty of many of the marketing approaches outlined in his study. Long before the “New” Hollywood, studios developed movies that could be sold to audiences through the use of bold imagery, stars, genre, and intertextuality. Even so, the term “high concept” gained currency during the 1980s and was linked to certain kinds of movies, not least the Paramount music and dance movie cycle. “It is not that change has not occurred,” argues Murray Smith in his discussion of a “putative” post-classicism, “but that the scale of change has been overestimated.”²⁹³ From a scholarly perspective, it is perhaps most useful to view high concept movies as a historically specific, if particularly blatant, manifestation of Hollywood’s longstanding pursuit of product differentiation and profit maximisation.

²⁸⁹ Wyatt, *High Concept*, 83.

²⁹⁰ Tony Schwartz, “Hollywood’s Hottest Stars,” *New York*, 30 July 1984, 27. Both mainstream and academic accounts have credited Barry Diller and Michael Eisner with transferring the principles of high concept from television to movies and developing high concept as a guiding principle at Paramount during the 1980s. See, for example: Wyatt, *High Concept*, 8; Bernard K. Dick, *Engulfed*, 178.

²⁹¹ Justin Wyatt, *High Concept*, 8.

²⁹² David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 7.

²⁹³ Murray Smith, “Theses on the philosophy of Hollywood history,” in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, eds. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), 14.

Producer as Brand: Control and collaboration

Through his deal at Paramount, Hughes became part of an elite of creative producers who wielded considerable influence over Hollywood cinema. Some of these producers, such as Steven Spielberg, were directors seeking greater autonomy. Others were individuals who had previously held key positions at major companies and desired greater control and, potentially, increased financial rewards for their role in both the business and creative aspects of production. In May 1985 *Newsweek*'s David Ansen declared the "The Producer is King Again":

Right now Hollywood is undergoing a power shift of enormous significance. The old-fashioned, creative producer is back, and he (and sometimes she) is a hot commodity. No mere check signer, this hands-on new producer models himself on the likes of Selznick and Dore Schary and Alexander Korda and Sam Spiegel, producers who put their imprint on a movie, producers whose names often surpassed the directors they hired and fired...²⁹⁴

While Ansen overstates the extent of the change that has taken place, his article nonetheless draws attention to some of the most influential and commercially successful producers in Hollywood during the mid-1980s. The report positioned John Hughes alongside the likes of Don Simpson, Jerry Bruckheimer, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and Ivan Reitman. Significantly, Ansen argued that Paramount "...set the model for a producer-dominated Hollywood: high-concept movies on tightfisted budgets."²⁹⁵ Keen to sustain the impression that the studio granted its major producers considerable autonomy, Frank Mancuso asserted, "You have a rebirth of something that existed many years ago in the industry when the producer had a strong creative input and really put his stamp on [the movie]."²⁹⁶ Undoubtedly, John Hughes' commercial track record meant that Paramount gave him considerable autonomy over his movies.

Although certain decisions had to be negotiated with the studio funding the project, under the package-unit system, independent producers managed financing, labour and the means of production.²⁹⁷ Whereas some producers took a backseat once the package was assembled, creative producers like Hughes also oversaw script development, casting and

²⁹⁴ David Ansen with Peter McAlevey, "The Producer is King Again," *Newsweek*, 20 May 1985, 84.

²⁹⁵ David Ansen with Peter McAlevey, "The Producer is King Again," 84.

²⁹⁶ David Ansen with Peter McAlevey, "The Producer is King Again," 84.

²⁹⁷ Staiger, "The Package-Unit System: Unit management after 1955," 330.

the production process. Commenting on the Paramount deal, Hughes stated, “I can expand the outlet for my material, and have greater control over its outcome. As a director I can only do one film a year, but now I can do three.”²⁹⁸ By controlling key elements of his projects and occupying multiple roles on a production, Hughes was able to develop a signature product. Hughes’ prolific output as a screenwriter meant that it was no longer physically possible for him to direct every single one of his screenplays. He explained that, “I generate more scripts than I can execute. I was rushed when I [directed] *Weird Science*, and I didn’t want it to be that way again.”²⁹⁹ As a consequence, Hughes forged a close working relationship with Howard Deutch, who was willing to surrender considerable creative control to the producer. Although Deutch occupied the director’s chair on *Pretty in Pink*, *Some Kind of Wonderful* and *The Great Outdoors*, Hughes retained his position as the dominant creative influence on the movies through his development of their packages and the creation of strategies for exploitation in ancillary markets.

In order to maintain continuity between his movies and to produce them as efficiently as possible, Hughes collaborated repeatedly with the same personnel during the late 1980s, several of whom had worked on *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Weird Science*. John W. Corso and Marilyn Vance, in particular, made significant contributions to the visual style of Hughes’ films. Corso was the production designer on nine of the filmmaker’s features from 1984 to 1989 and Vance designed the costumes for seven of Hughes’ movies, between 1985 and 1989. Other members of the art and set departments who worked on several Hughes productions during the decade included: Louise Mann (six movies as set designer), Jennifer Polito (six movies as set decorator) and Jack Merino (five movies as props master). Hughes also sought to maintain consistency in the sound design of his films. Ira Newborn, a relative newcomer to the film industry, composed the score for five of Hughes’ movies, between 1984 and 1989. On a more practical level, Hughes made sure that production sound was run efficiently by using the same sound mixer, James R. Alexander, on thirteen movies from 1984 to 1993. Similarly, although Hughes worked with a variety of film editors, he used the same assistant film editor, Jerrie Fowler, on nine movies. Fowler ran the cutting room and acted as liaison between the editor and production staff, including Hughes. By maintaining continuity in this role, Hughes ensured the smooth running of the editing process and was able to monitor editors’ work. As will

²⁹⁸ David Ansen with Peter McAlevy, “The Producer is King Again,” 84.

²⁹⁹ Philip Wuntch (Knight News Service), “Director John Hughes: ‘Pied Piper of the Brat Pack,’” *Charleston Post and Courier*, 8 March 1986, 35.

be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5, Hughes' decision to work repeatedly with the same personnel during the 1980s ensured that his films demonstrate a relatively consistent aesthetic.

Chart 6: John Hughes' Key Collaborators: 1984 -1989

	Jane Vickerilla Production Team	Michael Chinich Executive Producer	Tom Jacobson (Exec.) Producer	Howard Deutch Director	Kenny Ortega Choreographer	Bill Brown 2 nd Unit Director	John W. Corso Production Designer	Doug Kraner Production Designer	Marilyn Vance Costume Designer	Louise Mann Set Designer	Jennifer Polito Set Decorator	Jack Merino Art / Prop Dept.	Jerrie Fowler Assistant Film Editor	Ira Newborn Composer	James R. Alexander Sound Mixer	Tarquin Gotch Music Supervisor	Jackie Burch Casting Director	Janet Hirshenson & Jane Jenkins Casting Directors
<i>Sixteen Candles</i> (1984)							✓				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
<i>The Breakfast Club</i> (1985)	✓						✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
<i>Weird Science</i> (1985)	✓						✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
<i>Pretty in Pink</i> (1986)	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓							
<i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i> (1986)	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>Some Kind of Wonderful</i> (1987)	✓	✓		✓					✓							✓		
<i>Planes, Trains & Automobiles</i> (1987)	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<i>She's Having A Baby</i> (1988)	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
<i>The Great Outdoors</i> (1988)			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓						✓		
<i>Uncle Buck</i> (1989)	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Christmas Vacation</i> (1989)			✓												✓			

Data source: Imdb.com

Hughes' deal with Paramount and elevated status within the film industry coincided with increased coverage of his career and productions in mainstream publications and the trade press. Hughes was selective about granting personal interviews and clearly wished to conduct proceedings on his own terms. As Timothy Corrigan has pointed out, the interview is "...one of the few, documentable extratextual spaces where the auteur, in addressing cultures of fans and critical viewers, can engage and disperse his or her own agency as auteur."³⁰⁰ By controlling the circulation of information concerning his work, Hughes attempted to regulate his image. Initially, reporters seemed willing to acquiesce. For example, a few months after Hughes' move to Paramount, Bob Thomas of the Associated Press wrote a piece on the writer-producer-director's status as "the most in-demand filmmaker of the moment", describing him as "a 35-year-old former ad writer with an uncanny knack for mining the youth market."³⁰¹ Consistent with reports from earlier in the decade, Thomas noted Hughes' ordinary appearance and stated that, "Although his comedies are filled with wild situations, he seems downright sedate, if not square."³⁰² The article focused on how Hughes based his movies on his "normal" upbringing in a Chicago suburb, citing this as the main source of their appeal.³⁰³ Hughes also proclaimed his "love" for the work of Norman Rockwell. "Everyone can relate to his paintings because he relates to the life that we all know," declared Hughes, "...Norman Rockwell is art too. He created a fabulous record of American life."³⁰⁴ Thomas' report perpetuated Hughes' own self-appraisal as a regular guy who chronicled Middle America, rather than noting the considerable industrial power that the filmmaker had accrued.

***Pretty in Pink* and the Art of Cross-Promotion**

Hughes' first movie with Paramount, *Pretty in Pink*, fit neatly within the studio's interest in youth-oriented movies and cross-promotion between film and music. However, Hughes' and Molly Ringwald's account of the screenplay's inception implicitly denied any cynical motivation and suggested that sharing The Psychedelic Furs' "Pretty in Pink" was part of

³⁰⁰ Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam* (London: Routledge, 1991), 108.

³⁰¹ Bob Thomas (Associated Press), "Film Director Much in Demand," *Kentucky New Era*, 19 August 1985, 9B.

³⁰² Thomas, "Film Director Much in Demand," 9B.

³⁰³ Thomas, "Film Director Much in Demand," 9B.

³⁰⁴ Thomas, "Film Director Much in Demand," 9B.

their developing friendship.³⁰⁵ Hughes claimed that, once *Sixteen Candles* had wrapped, he “went home and wrote *Pretty in Pink* for Molly [Ringwald],” taking inspiration from the song that she had brought to his attention.³⁰⁶ However, he struggled to find a Hollywood studio willing to finance the project because executives were skeptical that a girl-oriented movie would draw a substantial audience. “Female movies are not something that the town jumps up and down for,” Hughes stated in a 1985 seminar, “They had this theory that boys make the purchase decisions... Tell it to Maybelline, y’know.”³⁰⁷ Hughes’ association with Ned Tanen would prove critical in getting the project into production. The filmmaker claimed that, of the major executives in Hollywood, Tanen was “the only guy that’s interested” in a “girl story”.³⁰⁸ By the time *Pretty in Pink* went into production in 1985, the commercial success of Hughes’ previous teen movies and Ringwald’s rapidly growing public profile no doubt eased any concerns that Paramount may have harboured.

The movie was Hughes’ first collaboration with director Howard Deutch, whose previous experience in music videos and movie trailers meant he was ideally suited to the project. Hughes served as executive producer on the movie, with Lauren Schuler receiving a producer credit for performing the role of line producer. Nonetheless, Hughes supervised production closely and chose to shoot the movie in California, close to his new headquarters. This unexpected move by one of the Illinois film industry’s main supporters became a source of conjecture in the trade press. Hughes claimed that he decided not to film *Pretty in Pink* in Chicago because the majority of the local production personnel he wanted to employ were unavailable, due to the increased popularity of Illinois as a film location.³⁰⁹ Undoubtedly, there was a limited pool of experienced film technicians in the city and Hughes had always used a mixture of local crew members and technicians from Los Angeles.³¹⁰ Furthermore, other factors eroded the feasibility of Hughes shooting all of his films in Illinois. For example, there were no permanent soundstages in the city and, by

³⁰⁵ “Molly Ringwald Interviews John Hughes,” *Seventeen*, Spring 1986; “MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party,” *MTV*, 27 February 1986, <http://youtu.be/jcsVecWErGM>.

³⁰⁶ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

³⁰⁷ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows; See also: “Molly Ringwald Interviews John Hughes.”

³⁰⁸ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows. See also: “Molly Ringwald Interviews John Hughes.”

³⁰⁹ “Hughes Opts for L.A.,” *Back Stage*, 24 May 1985, 39B; “Hot Chicago Film Scene Lures John Hughes Back Home,” *Back Stage*, 16 August 1985, 48.

³¹⁰ “Midwest Feature Films Blossom,” *Back Stage*, 27 April 1984, 48.

the mid-1980s, residents of the Chicago suburbs were increasingly frustrated by the impact of increased film production, particularly on car parking spaces.³¹¹ Nonetheless, Hughes' decision seemed to tarnish his reputation in his home state. As *Back Stage* observed in August 1985, "Hughes' migration to the West Coast seemed a betrayal [of] the Chicago film community."³¹²

The soundtrack of *Pretty in Pink* was integral to the movie's aesthetic and figured prominently in the promotional campaign devised by Paramount and A&M records. Hughes' reputation for developing commercially lucrative soundtracks prompted Paramount and A&M to give the writer-producer considerable control over soundtrack album's musical content. The movie's soundtrack featured a range of bands, the majority of which were British new wave acts. The fact that none of the acts selected to feature on the album had gained a Top 30 hit in the United States provided a clear indication of Paramount and A&M's confidence in Hughes' musical knowledge and his ability to popularize songs through his movies.³¹³ Prior to the album's release, A&M's vice president of marketing, Bob Reitman, insisted, "Hughes is really at the cutting edge of what's hip in music."³¹⁴ Compared to Hughes' previous projects, his corporate partners were much more willing to pay for rights to songs. Only three of the artists on the album were signed to A&M: OMD, Jesse Johnson and Suzanne Vega.³¹⁵ The trade press also seemed confident that the album would be popular with consumers. *Billboard's* Brian Chin described the album as "an extremely solid specimen in a notably erratic field".³¹⁶ He added, "atypically, it elicits good efforts from everyone involved."³¹⁷ Impressed with the "shrewd" selections on the album, another *Billboard* reviewer predicted, "barring box office disaster, this package should far well indeed."³¹⁸

³¹¹ Peggy Herbst, "Chicago-based Film Offices Battle Neighbourhood Burn-Out," *Backstage*, 22 August 1986, 47.

³¹² "Hot Chicago Film Scene Lures John Hughes Back Home," *Back Stage*, 16 August 1985, 48.

³¹³ Paul Grein, "Chart Beat," *Billboard*, 10 May 1986, 6.

³¹⁴ Sam Sutherland, "A&M Gives Green Light to *Pink* Campaign," *Billboard*, 15 February 1986, 4.

³¹⁵ Grein, "Chart Beat," 6.

³¹⁶ Brian Chin, "Dance Trax," *Billboard*, 1 March 1986, 57.

³¹⁷ Chin, "Dance Trax," 1 March 1986, 57.

³¹⁸ "Pretty in Pink: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack," *Billboard*, 15 February 1986, 70.

In the build-up to *Pretty in Pink*'s release, Paramount worked closely with A&M to exploit fully the cross-promotional opportunities that the movie package provided. *Billboard*'s Sam Sutherland observed that "influencing A&M's massive effort behind the project is its prior experience with *Pretty in Pink* executive producer John Hughes", pointing to *The Breakfast Club*'s success in "both music and movie markets."³¹⁹ Rather than worrying about competition between the singles, the record company sought to capitalize on the buzz surrounding the film and its soundtrack. In an unusual move, A&M decided to release three singles off the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack within short succession. The label put OMD's "If You Leave" out first, focusing on "top 40 and adult contemporary" radio stations. A week later, they shipped New Order's "Shell Shock", which was aimed at "dance markets". Finally, A&M released The Psychedelic Furs' "Pretty in Pink" in the week of the movie's release.³²⁰ In addition, the label distributed a promotional 12", featuring the tracks by OMD and Psychedelic Furs, to "AOR, progressive and college radio" stations.³²¹ A&M also paid for print advertising to support the release of the album. For instance, in order to stimulate interest amongst retailers, A&M took out a full-page advertisement on the inside cover of *Billboard* magazine on February 15, 1985.³²² The advert stressed that the soundtrack featured "all new music" and featured the album's cover art. Both the album sleeve and the covers of the 45 and 12" versions of OMD's "If You Leave", replicated the film's logo and central marketing image. Thus, the recordings provided additional promotional support for the movie, as well as creating an additional revenue stream.

³¹⁹ Sutherland, "A&M Gives Green Light to *Pink* Campaign," 4.

³²⁰ Sutherland, "A&M Gives Green Light to *Pink* Campaign," 4.

³²¹ Sutherland, "A&M Gives Green Light to *Pink* Campaign," 4; Brian Chin, "Dance Trax," *Billboard*, 22 February 1986, 57.

³²² "They're All Pretty in Pink," advertisement, *Billboard*, 15 February 1985, 2.

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 27 – Print Advertisement for the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack,
Billboard, 15 February 1985, 2.

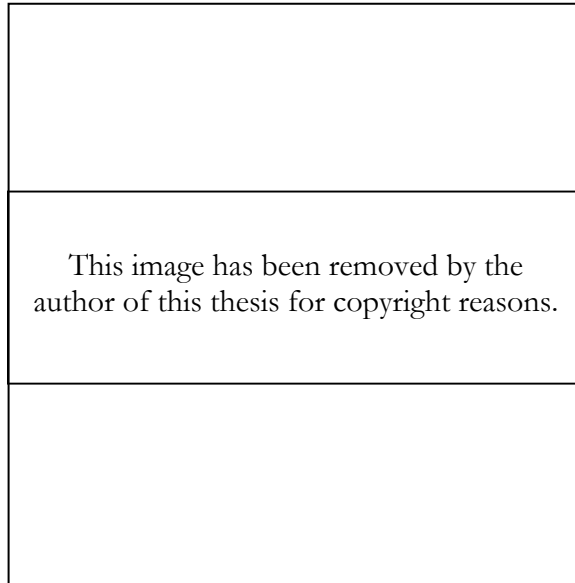


Image 28 - OMD "If You Leave" 45 Single

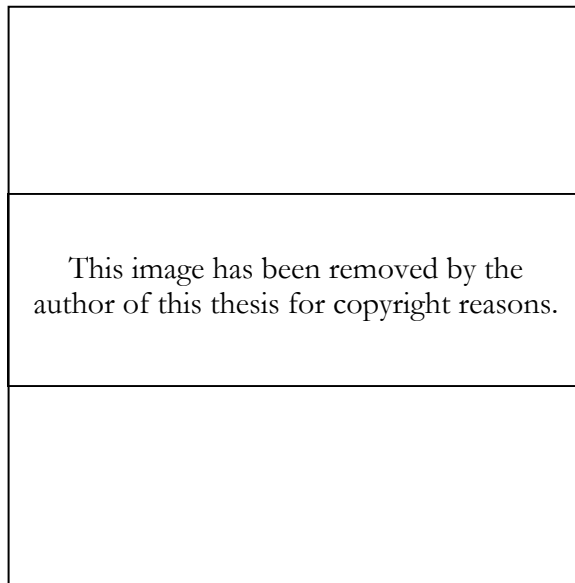


Image 29 - OMD "If You Leave" 12" Single

Without a doubt, A&M's biggest promotional coup was securing an "MTV Feature Presentation" for the "*Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party" which, stated an executive, "was a joint A&M and Paramount effort."³²³ Aired the night before the *Pretty in Pink*'s general release, the show provided one hour of free advertising for the movie that was aimed squarely at its target audience. A loosely organized collection of footage from the movie, interviews and backstage footage, the show featured live performances by OMD, The Rave-Ups and The Psychedelic Furs. In an interview, The Psychedelic Furs' lead singer, Richard Butler, was open about why they agreed to participate in the movie's soundtrack and its promotion: "I'd like to think [the movie] was going to get us across to more people. And I think it will certainly do that."³²⁴ John Hughes echoed this sentiment, stating, "I hope this video and the song and the film do for the Furs what *The Breakfast Club* and "Don't You" did for Simple Minds."³²⁵ Consistent with criticisms of MTV during this period, the VJs display a visible lack professionalism and struggle to marshal the show's content. Slightly more structured, if somewhat trite, interviews with *Pretty in Pink*'s cast and crew were offset by a range of awkward, spontaneous chats with celebrities in varying states of inebriation. While Michael J. Fox, Judge Reinhold and Dweezil Zappa lent their reasonably hip credentials to proceedings, more mature celebrities, including Andy Summers from The Police, Jon Anderson from Yes, and actress Teri Garr, seemed out of place. Michael Keaton, clearly aware of the event's obvious attempts to appeal to a youth audience joked, "This a fun party and what I like it is it's not very trendy."³²⁶ While it lacked finesse, the show encapsulated the strategies used to promote *Pretty in Pink* and aligned the movie with a various popular cultural trends.

The music videos for "Pretty and Pink" and "If You Leave", which featured in the MTV Premiere Party, were another important facet of the promotional strategy for *Pretty in Pink* and its soundtrack. Discussion of the music videos attempted to distance them from the already hackneyed "music trailer" format and focused on their innovative approaches to linking the movie to the song. Wayne Isham, the producer of the "Pretty in Pink" music

³²³ "MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party"; Chris McGowan, "Bright Connection for New Artists, New Music," *Billboard*, 21 June 1986, S-4.

³²⁴ "MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party."

³²⁵ "MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party."

³²⁶ "MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party."

video, emphasized the effort that had gone into the video and how he choose to foreground the Psychedelic Furs' performance:

We've all seen a lot of movie-connected videos and I wanted to do something different that would be fun to watch, which is why we took twelve-hundred pictures and animated them and hand-coloured them and projected them on weird structural shapes... To me of the utmost importance is the music so I wanted to get the band in performance.³²⁷

This new spin on the promotional music clip did not go unnoticed. *Billboard*, for instance, noted the video's novel "blend[ing] of still photographs of pink washes and patterns with footage from the film."³²⁸ Clearly a much lower budget affair, the music video for "If You Leave" focuses on the OMD's performance and uses low-key lighting to highlight the band's facial expressions. The clip makes reference to *Pretty in Pink* through the occasional superimposition of images from the film and through painted portraits of the stars on a stylized set. OMD's Andy McCluskey explained, "I think that everybody is just about sick and tired now of seeing... the band, the film, the band, the film, just cut together. So we're trying to make more subtle references to the film..."³²⁹ MTV added the video for "If You Leave" to the channel's playlist at the end of January 1986 and "Pretty in Pink" in late February, providing important exposure for the songs and movie.³³⁰

The music-focused, MTV-led strategy to publicise *Pretty in Pink* was backed-up by a standard promotional campaign, devised by Paramount. The trailers from the movie reinforced the centrality of music. One trailer intersperses scenes from the movie, primarily composed of close-up shots, with the sequence in which Duckie (Jon Cryer) dances to "Try A Little Tenderness".³³¹ Another trailer, which appears to have been used on television, is edited much more rapidly and scored throughout by The Psychedelic Furs' "Pretty in Pink".³³² Both trailers clearly signal the film's romance plot and high school backdrop. Through its uncluttered design that uses bold imagery and limited text, the poster (Image 30) also signals the movie's concept in a succinct and highly visual manner.

³²⁷ "MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party."

³²⁸ "Video Track," *Billboard*, 22 February 1986, 28.

³²⁹ "MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party."

³³⁰ *Billboard*, "MTV Programming as of January 29 1986," *Billboard*, 8 February 1986, 52; *Billboard*, "MTV Programming as of February 26 1986," *Billboard*, 8 March 1986, 45.

³³¹ "Trailer for *Pretty in Pink*," Paramount Pictures, 1986. Online: <http://youtu.be/y-X5ixDLuhM>

³³² "TV Trailer for *Pretty in Pink*," Paramount Pictures, 1986. Online: <http://youtu.be/tcSMDqXT52s>

The focal image suggests the film's generic affiliation by suggesting a love triangle, as well as foregrounding the movie's young stars. The text that appears alongside the image emphasises that it is coming-of-age tale with drama and some comedy. The logo for the film is by far the most eye-catching text on the poster. Although *Pretty in Pink*, as Christina Lee notes, was developed as a "vehicle to showcase Ringwald's acting prowess and celebrity power,"³³³ Paramount chose not to emphasise the actress' name on the poster and in print advertisements. Paul McDonald has argued that stars' names typically feature on publicity materials because, as brands, their names accrue cultural and economic capital and serve to position the film in the market.³³⁴ Although her fame was growing, Molly Ringwald's name was only meaningful to a relatively narrow audience. This said, her distinctive hairstyle and pouting lips would have been instantly recognisable to her fans and, due to the circulation of her image in predominantly visual formats such as glossy magazines and MTV, familiar to an increasing number of consumers.

³³³ Christina Lee, *Screening Generation X: The Politics and Popular Memory of Youth in Contemporary Cinema* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 48.

³³⁴ Paul McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 49.

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 30 - Pretty in Pink U.S. Theatrical Release Poster

Prominent advertisements for preview screenings in major U.S. publications formed part of Paramount's strategy to create "buzz" prior to the movie's release on February 28 1986. Owing to a lack of availability of relevant archival materials, however, it is difficult to establish how the film was marketed in publications aimed at the film's core audience of adolescents. In the *New York Times*, which clearly addresses a more mature readership, early print advertisements used the same bold imagery as the movie's poster and included large banners "Major Hollywood sneak preview..."³³⁵ Consistent with industry practice, later versions of the advertisements included selected comments from critics, whose "opinions substitute for the possible reaction of the patron" and potentially guide consumer choice.³³⁶ One version of the advertisement (shown in Image 31) retains the prominent logo and a cropped version of the central image but tries to sell the movie on the basis of performance and narrative, by including quotations highlighting the "romance" and "heart-warming" ending.³³⁷ In an attempt to appeal to a slightly broader audience, another version of the advertisement includes additional comments that describe the film as "a hip fairy tale", and which make reference to film's "tender humour" and engagement with "real concerns".³³⁸ Paramount therefore chose to reinforce the angle adopted in their original promotional materials after critics reviewed the movie, rather than radically adjusting the campaign. Ultimately, the studio's publicity campaign sought to create consistency between different media, through use of the movie's logo and the central image of the young stars.

³³⁵ "Pretty in Pink," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 5 March 1986, C12.

³³⁶ Wyatt, *High Concept*, 100.

³³⁷ "Pretty in Pink," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 7 March 1986, C9.

³³⁸ "Pretty in Pink," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 9 March 1986, H15.

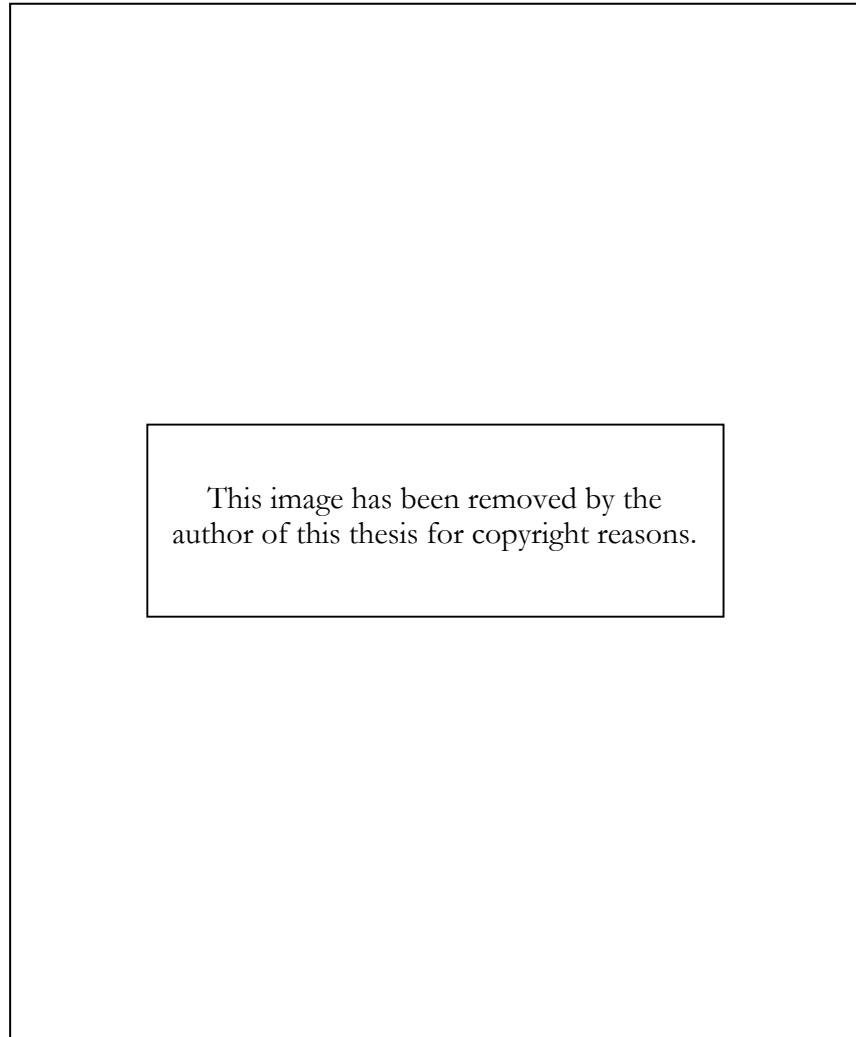


Image 31 - Pretty in Pink Print Advertisement, *New York Times*, 7 March 1986, C9.

Pretty in Pink also benefited from the American press' rapidly growing interest in Molly Ringwald. There had already been coverage of Ringwald's fledgling career for the release of *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*, which had tended to position her alongside her co-stars. *People* magazine, for instance, profiled the actress alongside Anthony Michael Hall after the release *Sixteen Candles*, focusing on their mix of sophistication and teenage normality.³³⁹ However, the volume of press coverage of Ringwald's career and personal life increased considerably in the build up to the release of *Pretty in Pink*. Many of these articles positioned Molly Ringwald as John Hughes' "muse". Without hinting at an impropriety, accounts of their meeting and relationship were often couched in quasi-romantic terms. For instance, the October 1985 issue of *Elle* recounted their meeting in a style befitting of a teen romance novel: "They clicked. He wore sneakers, had a great record collection and wrote that script with Molly Ringwald's picture pinned over his typewriter."³⁴⁰ In the preface to an interview that Ringwald conducted with Hughes, *Seventeen* magazine referred to the "electricity between the two", which "must have a lot to do with their recent successes."³⁴¹ Media interest in Ringwald continued to increase once the movie hit cinemas but these reports placed a greater emphasis on the actress' career independent of Hughes. In one interview, the actress disclosed, "For me the teenage cycle is pretty much over... I don't see myself working with John again. I want to do adult roles."³⁴² An article in *People* magazine, suggested Ringwald's appearance in *Pretty in Pink* and her fan following confirmed her status as "a real star" who is "way ahead of the Brat Pack."³⁴³ The eighteen-year-old actress, the report noted, had recently signed "a new contract with United Artists that allows her to develop and virtually control her own projects."³⁴⁴

Paramount released *Pretty in Pink* in the domestic market on 28th February 1986. The movie entered the weekly U.S. box office chart at No. 2, earning a high per-screen average of roughly \$9,000 across 827 screens, and peaked at No. 1 in the U.S. box office the following

³³⁹ David Hutchings, "Molly Ringwald Goes to the Head of the Teen Class with *Pretty In Pink*, but She'd Rather Play Grown-Up," *People*, 24 March 1986, 87.

³⁴⁰ Steve Pond, "Interview with Molly Ringwald," *Elle*, October 1985. Online: <http://www.elle.com/cm/elle/images/01/ELLE-25th-anniversary-2-lgn.jpg>

³⁴¹ "Molly Ringwald Interviews John Hughes."

³⁴² Jamie Portman (Southam News Syndicate, Hollywood), "The very bankable Molly Ringwald," *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 February 1986, F6.

³⁴³ David Hutchings, "Molly Ringwald Goes to the Head of the Teen Class with *Pretty In Pink*," 87.

³⁴⁴ David Hutchings, "Molly Ringwald Goes to the Head of the Teen Class with *Pretty In Pink*," 87.

week.³⁴⁵ During its domestic theatrical release, the movie grossed over \$40 million and ranked 22nd in the annual U.S. box office chart.³⁴⁶ While *Pretty in Pink* was not a major hit, it was certainly profitable because the budget for the movie came in at \$7 million, less than half the industry average.³⁴⁷ Released the same week as the movie, the *Pretty in Pink Original Soundtrack* entered the Billboard 200 on March 1 1986 at No. 118 and peaked at No. 5.³⁴⁸ RIAA awarded the album gold certification during April 1986 and the record peaked at No. 5 in the Billboard 200 on May 3 1986.³⁴⁹ The soundtrack was the 3rd highest selling soundtrack album and the 50th highest selling pop album of 1986, according to *Billboard's* end of year charts.³⁵⁰ The singles also performed well in the music charts. Psychedelic Furs' re-recorded version of "Pretty in Pink" peaked at No. 40 in the Billboard Hot 100, making it the band's most successful single in the United States.³⁵¹ However, the biggest hit from the soundtrack was Orchestral Maneuvers In the Dark's "If You Leave". Recorded specifically for the movie, the single peaked at No. 4 in the Billboard Hot 100.³⁵² The success of *Pretty in Pink* at the box office and in the popular music charts gave Paramount the confidence that Hughes could make movies that were highly marketable, but that fit within the studio's production policies.

While *Pretty in Pink's* concept and promotional campaign undoubtedly satisfied corporate agendas, Hughes tried to show that his interest in popular music was genuine. In a 1986 interview with MTV, he refuted accusations that his use of music in movies was cynically motivated. "I don't look at the album as a marketing tool. Because if you do that you're gonna fail, " he suggested, "It's really betraying the music. When I approach a band, I wanna respect them and be respectful of their music."³⁵³ Hughes' decision to focus on new

³⁴⁵ "Pretty in Pink: Weekly Box Office," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=prettyinpink.htm>

³⁴⁶ "Pretty in Pink: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=prettyinpink.htm>

³⁴⁷ Louise Farr, "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes," *Palm Beach Daily News*, 3 October 1986, 6.

³⁴⁸ "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 1 March 1986, 75; "Pretty in Pink Original Soundtrack Awards," *Allmusic*, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/pretty-in-pink-original-soundtrack-mw0000195345/awards>

³⁴⁹ Paul Grein, "April Brings Certifications Shower," *Billboard*, 10 May 1986, p. 91; "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 3 May 1986, 72.

³⁵⁰ "Top Pop Albums: Soundtrack/Original Cast," *Billboard*, 27 December 1986, Y-22; "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, 27 December 1986, Y-19.

³⁵¹ "Hot 100: Sales," *Billboard*, 7 June 1986, 89.

³⁵² "Pretty in Pink Original Soundtrack Awards."

³⁵³ "John Hughes Musical Legacy." *MTV.com*

music gave a certain amount of validity to his claims and he emphasized the authenticity of the bands he had selected. For instance, he declared that he was glad that The Psychedelic Furs agreed to participate in the project because “they’re a band that hasn’t compromised and those kind of bands are getting harder and harder to find.”³⁵⁴ Critics and consumers clearly found this approach to a movie soundtrack refreshing. Following the success of the album, *Billboard*’s Paul Grein remarked, “What makes *Pretty in Pink* unique among hit soundtracks is that it’s not a star-studded package, but a collection of songs by new and developing acts.”³⁵⁵ Similarly, the *New York Times*’ Stephen Holden credited the soundtrack with attempting to popularize “an idiom and musical attitude that until now have languished on the side lines of mainstream pop.”³⁵⁶ He concluded, “*Pretty in Pink* wants to define the new cutting edge of mainstream teenage pop taste.”³⁵⁷ J.D. Considine, a writer for *Musician*, a magazine aimed at rock musicians and fans remained more skeptical about the movie’s motives. “Though it relegates new music to the status of a fashion accessory,” he contended, “the combination of the hit-movie maker and nubile nymph Molly Ringwald is guaranteed to bring these bands their biggest audience ever.”³⁵⁸

Paramount Home Video aimed *Pretty in Pink* at the rental market, with a price tag of \$79.95.³⁵⁹ By 1986 Paramount had shown that it was willing to take risks in the home video market. The company had already enjoyed some success with sell-through pricing, selling *Star Trek II: Wrath of Khan*, *Flashdance* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* for \$39.95 in order to stimulate higher sales volume.³⁶⁰ However, these strategies largely focused on major blockbusters and adult-oriented titles. Nonetheless, Paramount tried to stimulate retailers’ interest with a one-page feature in *Billboard*, which cited the movie’s box office credentials and its status as a “music sensation”.³⁶¹ Advertisements for video release made use of the same bold visuals that had adorned the movie’s publicity materials and soundtrack. Similarly, the video’s packaging, designed to stand out in video stores, encapsulated the key

³⁵⁴ “MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party.”

³⁵⁵ Grein, “Chart Beat,” *Billboard*, 10 May 1986, 6.

³⁵⁶ Stephen Holden, “Movie Music Spices a Variety of Scenarios,” *New York Times*, 6 April 1986, H6.

³⁵⁷ Holden, “Movie Music Spices a Variety of Scenarios,” H26.

³⁵⁸ J.D. Considine, “Short Rock Takes: Original Soundtrack: *Pretty in Pink*,” *Musician*, April 1986, 92.

³⁵⁹ “Top Videocassettes Sales,” *Billboard*, 25 October 1986, 52.

³⁶⁰ Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video*, 133.

³⁶¹ “*Pretty in Pink*: The Videocassette Event,” print advertisement, *Billboard*, 6 September 1986, 50.

attractions of the movie. The sleeve featured the movie's logo and "A John Hughes Production" laid over the central image of the stars, with Ringwald highlighted in pink. Released in late October, the video proved to be a popular rental title.³⁶² The video release of *Pretty in Pink* placed 31st in *Billboard's* 1986 Annual "Top Videocassette Rentals" Chart.³⁶³ The additional income from the video release would definitely have been an additional bonus for Paramount and provided further assurance of John Hughes' commercial insight.

³⁶² "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 25 October 1986, 44.

³⁶³ "Top Videocassettes Rentals," *Billboard*, 26 December 1987, Y-40.

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 32 - Advertisement for *Pretty in Pink* video release³⁶⁴

³⁶⁴ “*Pretty in Pink*: The Videocassette Event.”

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

Released just four months after *Pretty in Pink*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* was a very different project to the Molly Ringwald vehicle. Directed by Hughes and starring Matthew Broderick, the movie is a light-hearted comedy that follows the exploits of a charismatic high school senior as he plays truant from school and spends the day in Chicago with his friends. On the basis of *Ferris Bueller's* "irreverent attitude, cast sassiness, tons of rock music and all the other expected ingredients", *Variety* predicted that the movie would be a "reasonable summer comedy hit for Paramount."³⁶⁵ Whereas Paramount and Hughes devised a well-honed niche marketing campaign for *Pretty in Pink*, the distributor cast a much wider net when publicizing *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. In an effort to attract Hughes' established teenage audience, Paramount supplied exhibitors with posters (shown in Image 33) that were handed out at preview screenings.³⁶⁶ The company also produced stickers that replicated the image from the poster (see Image 34) and pin badges that featured the movie's short-hand "FBDO" logo and "Leisure Rules", one of the slogans from the advertising campaign (see Image 35). The promotional materials for *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, as Justin Wyatt notes, tried to build audience familiarity with the movie by "replicating a distinctive graphic design and logo from the ad campaign" across a range of texts.³⁶⁷ Not only did the posters, badges and stickers act as an incentive for teenagers to attend preview screenings, they also served to promote *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* by making its logo a presence on teenager's clothes and accessories and in their lockers and bedrooms. Advertisements in the *New York Times*, demonstrate how Paramount sought to attract a wider audience to *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* than Hughes' established adolescent fan base. A central part of the distributor's strategy was to emphasise the comedy in the film, reproducing quotations from critics that labelled it "The year's funniest movie" and "The funniest film in years."³⁶⁸ (Image 36) In other advertisements, Paramount tried to target specific audience groups. One advert (Image 36) emphasised to parents that, in spite of the movie's PG-13 rating, *Ferris Bueller* was "A movie you can take the whole family to."³⁶⁹ Another advertisement (Image 37) addressed a professional, adult audience, featuring the text: "Call in sick, miss that board meeting, but don't let Ferris pass you by."³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ "Ferris Bueller's Day Off: Airheads without a cause," *Variety*, 4 June 1986, 16.

³⁶⁶ "Ferris Buellers Day Off," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 6 June 1986, C13.

³⁶⁷ Wyatt, *High Concept*, 25.

³⁶⁸ "Ferris Buellers Day Off," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 29 June 1986, H10.

³⁶⁹ "Ferris Buellers Day Off," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 29 June 1986, H10.

³⁷⁰ "Ferris Buellers Day Off," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 11 July 1986, C12.

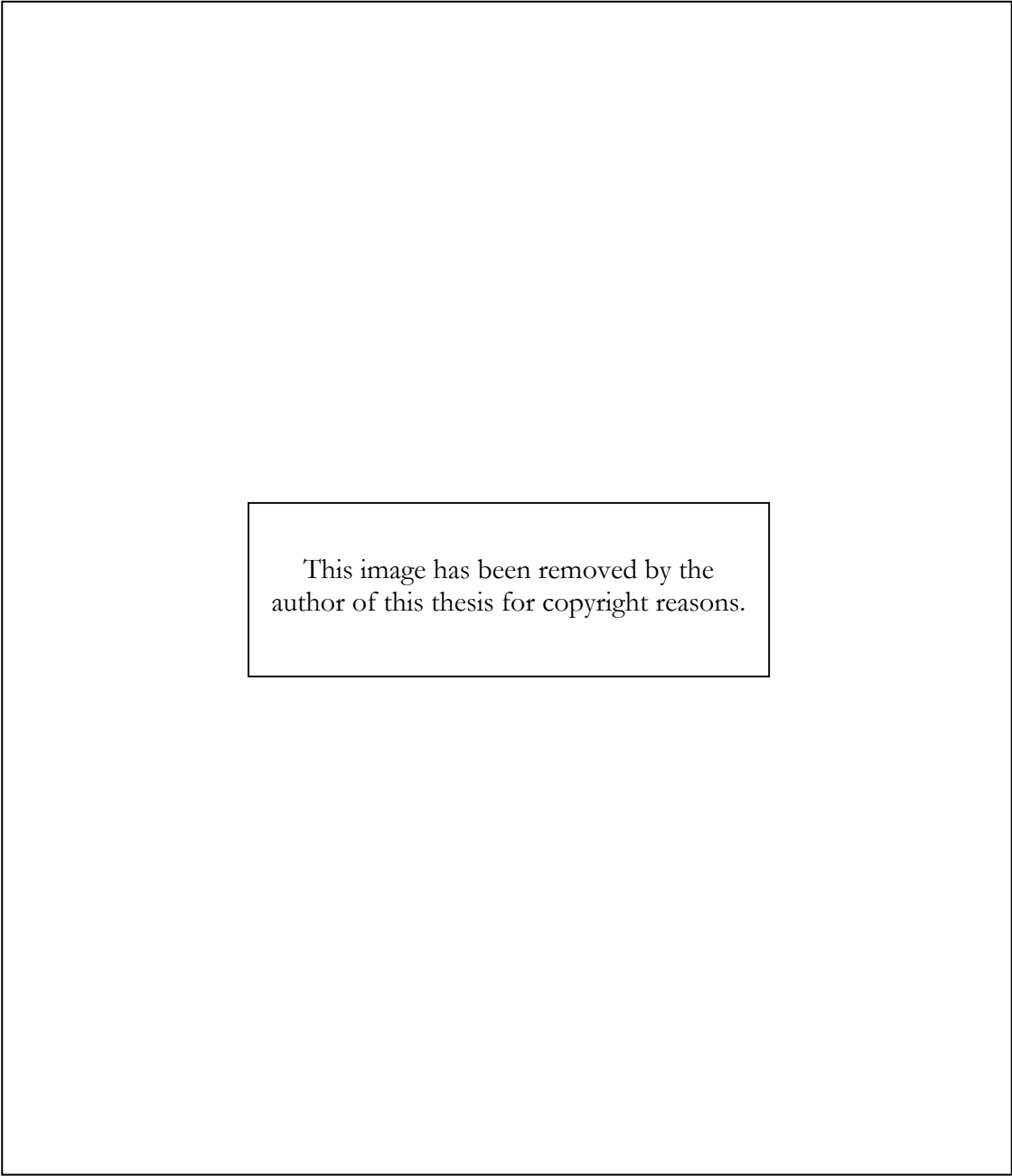
This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 33 - *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* Preview Screening Giveaway Poster

These images have been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 34 - *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* Sticker

Image 35 - *FBDO* Pin Badge



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 36 - Print Advertisement for *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *New York Times*, 29 June 1986,

H10.

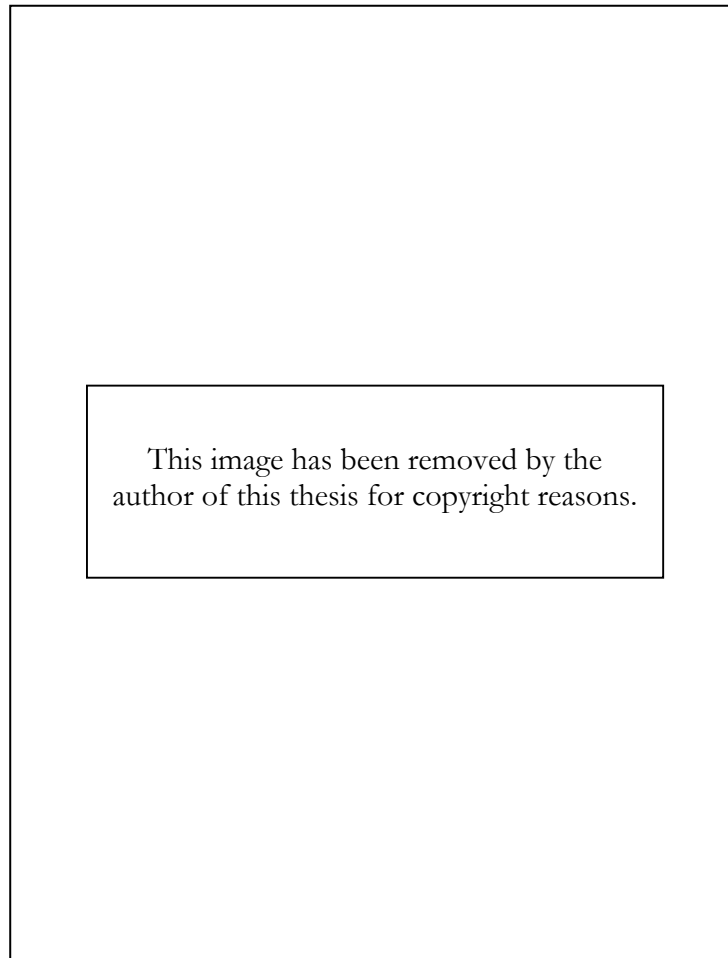


Image 37 - Print Advertisement for *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, 11 July 1986, C12.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off also featured within a larger publicity campaign designed to promote Paramount's brand and the studio's major releases during the summer of 1986. During early July 1986, Paramount released an advertisement that placed *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* alongside *Top Gun*, the studio's major summer blockbuster release. The ad bore the slogan "Make it a Paramount Summer!," as well as the studio's logo. The logo acted as a guarantee of quality, building on the reputation that the studio developed earlier in the decade, as well as its status as one of the oldest studios in Hollywood. "Throughout its history," notes Paul Grainge, "Paramount has sought to exploit its trademark advantage as a major film distributor, using its logo to authenticate and differentiate its film product."³⁷¹ Paramount also created a television advertisement for both films, which advised audiences to: "Take off with *Top Gun*... And take it easy with *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*."³⁷² These advertisements sought to give *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* the same "event" status as the Tom Cruise vehicle. Overall, the "Paramount Summer" campaign aimed to encapsulate Paramount's brand identity during this period. The advertisements also served as a reminder that Paramount had contracts with the industry's leading producers, Simpson and Bruckheimer and John Hughes. Although *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* never topped the domestic box office chart, the film showed strong legs and grossed roughly \$70 million during its run, making it the 10th highest grossing movie of 1986.³⁷³ At the end of the summer season, the *New York Times* proclaimed that, "with *Top Gun* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Paramount is the unchallenged leader among the studios."³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 85.

³⁷² "TV spot for *Top Gun*/*Ferris Bueller*," Paramount Pictures, Summer 1986, <http://youtu.be/HvYMZUBOMLY>

³⁷³ "*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=ferrisbuellersdayoff.htm>

³⁷⁴ Aljean Harmetz, "How Summer's Films Ranked at the Box Office," *New York Times*, 8 September 1986, C17.

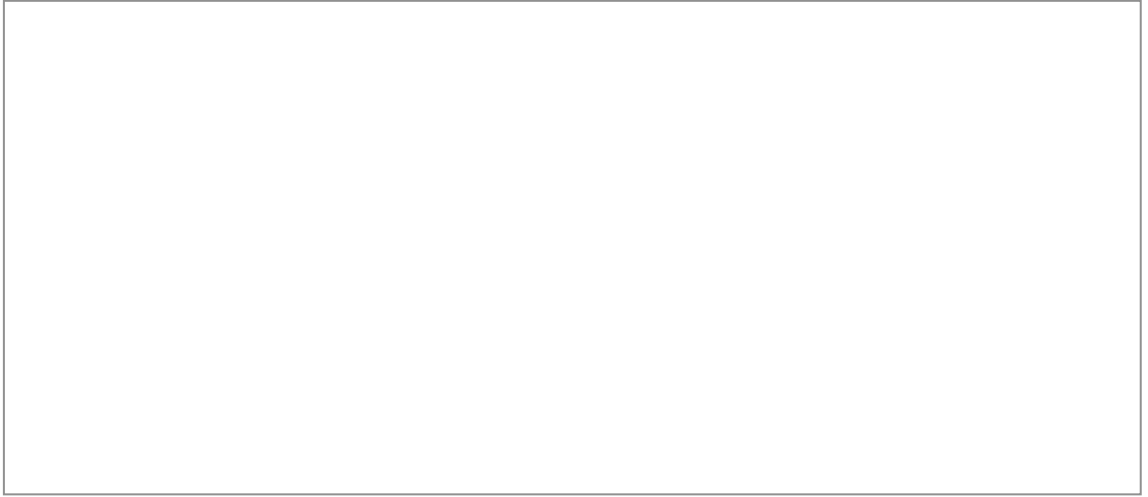


Image 38 - "Make it a Paramount Summer!" Advertisement

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

In stark contrast to the complex cross-promotional strategy developed for *Pretty in Pink*, there was no soundtrack album associated with *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, nor were there any official single releases. In his retrospective appraisal of the summer's hit movies, Steve Gett remarked on the fact that "John Hughes did not jump on the soundtrack bandwagon" and observed that just two films out of the box office top ten for the season were not accompanied by soundtrack releases.³⁷⁵ Unsurprisingly, the filmmakers' commercial partners were unimpressed by the lack of an album release. He later observed, "A&M was very angry with me over that; they begged me to put one out."³⁷⁶ However, Hughes felt that the movie's soundtrack was too eclectic to be commercially viable.³⁷⁷ Hughes did, however, compile a promotional single consisting of two songs for which he was the rights holder in the U.S., "Beat City" by The Flowerpot Men and "I'm Afraid" by Blue Room. His company sent the 45 rpm single to his mailing list, which consisted of roughly 100,000 fans by 1986.³⁷⁸ By rewarding Hughes' fans for their loyalty with a limited edition artifact, this direct marketing technique sought to stimulate word-of-mouth publicity for *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* amongst the youth demographic. According to *Billboard*, Polygram decided to "rush-release" the single "Oh Yeah" by Swiss electro duo Yello, after the film proved popular with audiences.³⁷⁹ The packaging for the single clearly sought to capitalize on the song's association with the movie. The phrase "as featured in the hit movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*" appeared in bold print on the sleeve for the 7" release (as shown in Image 39) and, similarly, a promotional 12" carried the label "featured in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*". In addition, Capitol Records reissued The Beatles' "Twist and Shout" after the song appeared in both *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and the Rodney Dangerfield vehicle *Back to School*. The single peaked at No. 23 *Billboard* Hot 100 and remained in the Top 40 for seven weeks. Inclusion on the film's soundtrack also provided British band Sigue Sigue Sputnik with extra publicity for the release of their Giorgio Moroder produced album *Flaunt It*, which came out in mid-August 1986 through EMI.³⁸⁰ While these recordings were not directly profitable to Hughes or his corporate partners, their popularity reinforced the impression that the filmmaker's movies could stimulate record sales.

³⁷⁵ Steve Gett, "Music, Movies Prove to be a Perfect Summer Pair," *Billboard*, 20 September 1986, 86.

³⁷⁶ William Ham, "Straight Outta Sherman [sic]" *Lollipop.com*, 2003. Online: <http://www.lollipop.com/issue47/47-02-03.html>

³⁷⁷ Ham, "Straight Outta Sherman."

³⁷⁸ Ham, "Straight Outta Sherman."

³⁷⁹ Steve Gett, "On the Beat: Short Takes I," *Billboard*, 9 August 1986, 31.

³⁸⁰ "Top Pop Albums," *Billboard*, August 23, 1986, 91.

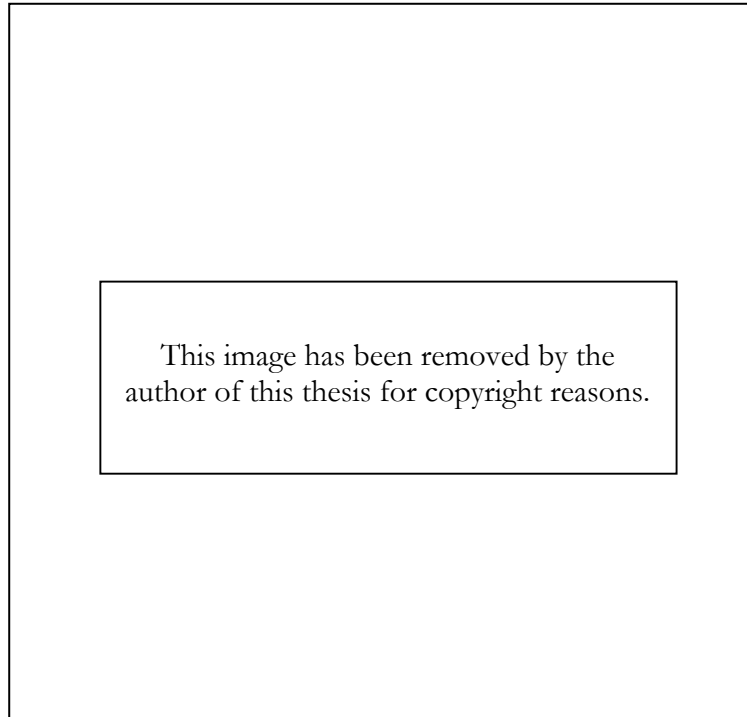


Image 39 - "Oh Yeah" 7" single sleeve

Following the box office success of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Louise Farr, a journalist working for the Fairchild News Syndicate, interviewed Hughes about his career. The article was the first relatively widely circulated article that hinted at the transformation that Hughes' image had undergone during the mid-1980s. For the most part, Farr gave a fairly balanced account of Hughes' professional background, but noted that he had acquired "a reputation for being prolific but somewhat difficult."³⁸¹ She also suggested that he "seems not to get along too well these days with his teenage star, Molly Ringwald."³⁸² Overall, the feature was not openly critical of Hughes, but Farr certainly revealed inconsistencies between the filmmaker's established image and the changes wrought by his elevated professional status. Her description of the "Hughes building" and the filmmaker's clothing offer the clearest indication that he had developed more fashionable tastes since moving to the West Coast. His office includes a desk that is a "slab of grey marble" and a coffee table made of "fake cement upon which sit two massive plastic form rocks."³⁸³ A picture of Hughes in a "black Gianni Versace" suit, sporting a fashionable haircut accompanied the article.³⁸⁴ Confirmation, perhaps, of Molly Ringwald's observation in *Time* magazine a couple of months earlier that he had "changed" since his move to Los Angeles and "started looking very GQ."³⁸⁵ Presumably, Hughes was aware that his increasingly urbane countenance distanced him from his Middle American audience and attempted to reinforce the normalcy of this lifestyle. For instance, he maintained, "I don't have a lot of industry pals. I don't go to Maui on people's boats and stuff."³⁸⁶ In spite of the filmmaker's attempt to regulate his image, the press' presentation of Hughes as a Hollywood yuppie sat awkwardly in relation to the modest, Midwestern image that he had cultivated earlier in the decade.

³⁸¹ Louise Farr (Fairchild News Syndicate), "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes," *Palm Beach Daily*, October 3, 1986, 6

³⁸² Farr, "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes."

³⁸³ Farr, "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes."

³⁸⁴ Farr, "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes."

³⁸⁵ Richard Corliss, 'Well, Hello Molly!' *Time*, May 26, 1986. p. 71

³⁸⁶ Farr, "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes."

Some Kind of Wonderful and Hughes Music

The founding of Hughes Music at the start of 1987 confirmed John Hughes' credentials as a major industry player.³⁸⁷ According to the *Los Angeles Times*' Patrick Goldstein, MCA Records' decision to award the filmmaker a five-album deal and a custom label gave Hughes "unprecedented clout, not just as a film maker but as a force in the music industry" and confirmed his status as "Hollywood's one-man entertainment conglomerate."³⁸⁸ Although Hollywood executives were increasingly preoccupied with the cross-promotional opportunities offered by movie soundtracks, the deal between Hughes and MCA was highly unusual. As Goldstein observed, "It's practically unheard of for a filmmaker to have his own record company – but then it's equally unprecedented for a soundtrack, like *Some Kind of Wonderful*, to be largely populated with groups that have never been signed to a U.S. record contract."³⁸⁹ The Hughes Music deal not only reflected Hughes' standing within the music and film industries following his cross-promotional successes during the mid-1980s, but also recognized the filmmaker's status as a tastemaker. As Clive Nancarrow and Pamela Nancarrow explain, corporations prize the expertise of "messengers of cool" because their insider knowledge of cutting-edge trends can help companies attract the youth market.³⁹⁰

Hughes' musical knowledge was evident in the content of first album released on the Hughes Music label, *Some Kind of Wonderful: Music from the Motion Picture*. A review in *Fanfare*, "the magazine for serious record collectors", praised the album and noted "Hughes' impeccable musical tastes":

John Hughes continues to produce great soundtracks to his increasingly mundane teenage flicks. What's refreshing about *Some Kind of Wonderful* is that so little of the music (and so few of the artists) is familiar. This is probably the best assemblage of new artists and new music on a soundtrack album since last year's *Pretty in Pink*, also by Hughes.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Richard Harrington, "On the Right Sound Track," *The Washington Post*, 25 February 1987, B7.

³⁸⁸ Patrick Goldstein, "John Hughes in the Pink at MCA" *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-03-01/entertainment/ca-6707_1_john-hughes

³⁸⁹ Goldstein, "John Hughes in the Pink at MCA."

³⁹⁰ Clive Nancarrow and Pamela Nancarrow, "Hunting for Cool Tribes," in *Consumer Tribes*, eds. Bernard Cova, Robert Kozinets and Avi Shankar (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), 136–142.

³⁹¹ Frederic Sibler, "Some Kind of Wonderful," *Fanfare* 10, no. 5, 256.

The artists featured on the record were more obscure and less aligned with mainstream pop music trends than those on the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack. Jesus and Mary Chain, Pete Shelley (formerly of The Buzzcocks), and Stephen Duffy (co-founder of Duran Duran) were probably the best-known acts on the track listing. Working in a similar vein, Hughes developed a concept album as the soundtrack to *She's Having a Baby*, with the vinyl LP version divided into a "He" and a "She" side. The recording consisted of excerpts of the film's score by Stewart Copeland (former drummer for The Police) and a range of tracks performed by British artists, including Kate Bush, XTC, Everything But The Girl, Bryan Ferry and Kirsty MacColl. Both albums seemed to be a continuation of Hughes' attempts to bring more marginal forms of pop music into the mainstream.

Neither of these albums was a hit of the same magnitude as the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack. The *Some Kind of Wonderful* soundtrack peaked at No. 57 and the *She's Having A Baby* album achieved a chart high of No. 92 in the Billboard 200.³⁹² The underwhelming box office performances and short theatrical runs of both *Some Kind of Wonderful* and *She's Having A Baby* meant that relatively few people encountered the songs in the contexts of the movies. As had been the case for Hughes earlier soundtracks, the artwork for the single and album releases associated with *Some Kind of Wonderful* and *She's Having A Baby* featured logos and promotional images for the films (see Images 40-42) However, these "brands" lacked the appeal of Hughes' earlier efforts. Both recordings faced considerable competition in the charts because, as Jeff Smith observes, the soundtrack boom of the mid-1980s "resulted in a glutted market" with "increased traffic in soundtracks," particularly during peak release periods.³⁹³ The unoriginal music videos devised for the main singles also prevented them from standing out in a crowded marketplace. Whereas the videos for "Don't You", "Pretty in Pink" and "If You Leave" avoid the standard "music trailer" format, the music videos for "I Go Crazy" and "She's Having A Baby" offer little in the way of aesthetic novelty. The video for "I Go Crazy" intersperses footage of the band performing in a set, which loosely references the movie, with shots from the film. Occasionally transitions to the movie footage are made cutting from Flesh For Lulu's drummer to Watts (Mary Stewart Masterson) playing the drums, although this technique is not used consistently. Similarly, the music video for Dave Wakeling's "She's Having A Baby" consists primarily of

³⁹² "Some Kind of Wonderful Awards," *Allmusic*, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/some-kind-of-wonderful-mw0000650793/awards>; "She's Having A Baby: Awards," *Allmusic*, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/shes-having-a-baby-mw0000194580/awards>,

³⁹³ Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce*, 204.

Wakeling performing, with assistance from backing vocalist Kirsty MacColl, in front of large projections of clips from the movie (see Image 44).

These images have been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

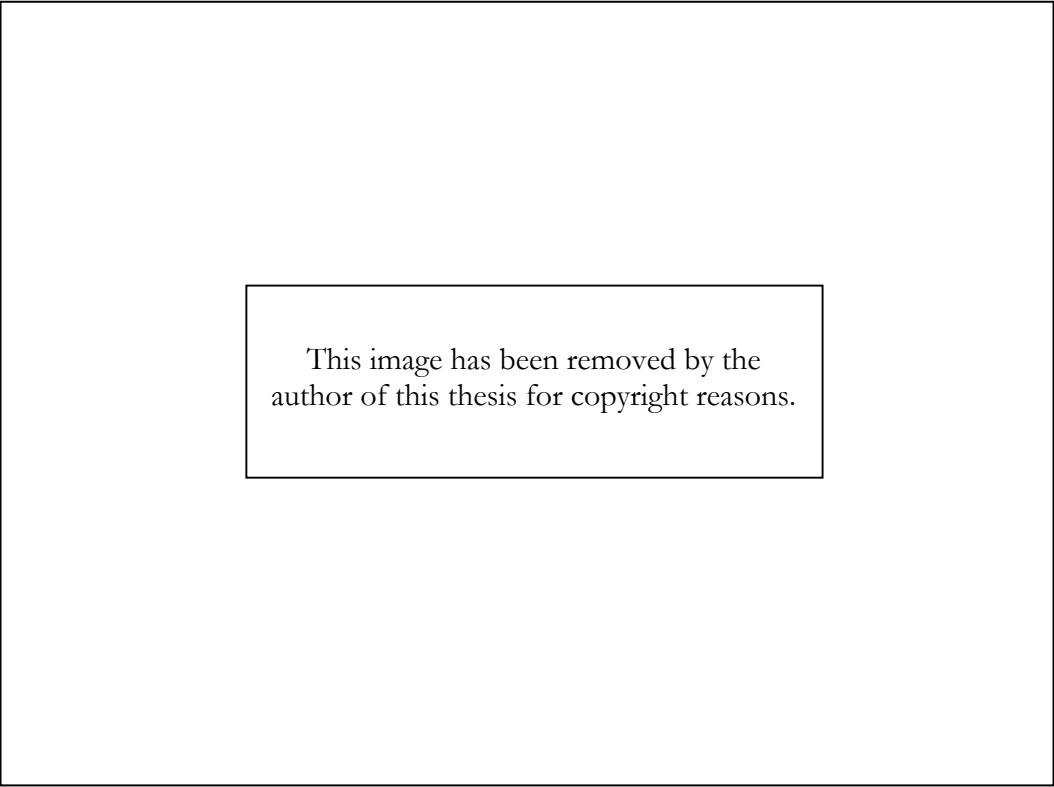
Image 40 - “I Go Crazy” 7” Single Cover
Art (Front)

Image 41 - “I Go Crazy” 7” Single Cover
Art (Reverse)

These images have been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 42 – Dave Wakeling “She’s Having A
Baby” 7” (Front)

Image 43 – Dave Wakeling “She’s Having A
Baby” 7” (Reverse)



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 44 – Music Video for Dave Wakeling’s “She’s Having A Baby”

Arguably, the mismatch between Hughes' audience and the kinds of music on the albums was the biggest problem blighting the commercial prospects of the soundtracks. The style of music on the *Some Kind of Wonderful* soundtrack was associated with college radio, rather than mainstream radio stations and MTV, and so the album and singles received less airplay than the songs on the *Pretty in Pink* soundtrack. The appearance of certain bands on the soundtrack also created a tension between their attitudes as rock musicians and the film's address to a female audience. The notions of "cool" and "authenticity" possessed by alternative rock bands and their fans conflicted with the commercial objectives of the *Some Kind of Wonderful Soundtrack*. As Norma Coates argues, "the female teenybopper, defined in opposition to the true, male, rock and roller, fan *or* artist, was discursively invented and subsequently naturalized as the binary opposite of the "authentic" rock fan in the mid-1960s."³⁹⁴ Moreover, the late 1980s saw the resurgence of aggressively masculine rock bands that sought to reclaim "hip... from the apparently "feminine" clutches of New Pop groups."³⁹⁵ Jesus and Mary Chain, for instance, would make deliberately offensive and sexist comments in interviews, such as: "I want some woman to get down on her hands and knees, suck my knob off, buy me loads of drink, give me loads of drugs..."³⁹⁶ Even the presence of John Hughes' name could not fully resolve the tensions between the sensibilities of the bands on the *Some Kind of Wonderful Album* and the filmmaker's target demographic.

John Hughes did not originally conceive Hughes Music as merely an outlet for his film soundtracks. When he founded the label, Hughes stated that his long-term aspirations were for a legitimate, standalone record label. "Right now, the films are a launch for the music," he announced, "They drive the new label. But we'd like the label to eventually drive itself – and help establish a new generation of great bands."³⁹⁷ In line with these ambitions, the filmmaker appointed Tarquin Gotch as Head of Hughes Music. Gotch had held various positions in the British record industry, working with artists such as Simple Minds, Thompson Twins, The Stray Cats, Elaine Page and The Beat.³⁹⁸ During the mid-1980s, he managed a number of British acts that became popular in the United States, such as

³⁹⁴ Norma Coates, "Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s," *Popular Music Studies*, 15, no. 1 (2003), 71.

³⁹⁵ Doyle Greene, *Teens, TV and Tunes: The Manufacturing of American Adolescent Culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 32.

³⁹⁶ Ted Mico, "Power Discord," *Spin*, December 16.

³⁹⁷ Goldstein, "John Hughes in the Pink at MCA."

³⁹⁸ "Sire Shutters London Office: Ups A&R Role," *Billboard*, 18 July 1981, 71.

General Public, XTC, The Dream Academy and The Beat. Gotch's wealth of experience in the music industry, personal contacts, and knowledge of contemporary performers was an invaluable resource for Hughes. Initially, his presence also helped to bolster the credibility of Hughes Music. Gotch told the *Los Angeles Times*, "We're trying to find fresh music, to break new ground and not rely on the same established stars."³⁹⁹ In part, Hughes' and Gotch's struggle to accomplish their plan to turn Hughes Music into an "indie" label was a product of the American record industry's changing focus "from record sales to rights exploitation."⁴⁰⁰ The industrial conditions that had supported Hughes' soundtrack successes, and helped him to acquire his own label, made it extremely difficult for alternative rock bands to crossover to the mainstream during the late 1980s, because companies were reluctant to invest heavily in musicians from marginal genres. For instance, MCA passed on the first band that Hughes Music signed, Flesh For Lulu, because the label felt that the deal was too expensive.⁴⁰¹ The bigger problem facing Hughes Music, which the *Some Kind of Wonderful* soundtrack illustrated, was that John Hughes' audience and his "signature product" were antithetical to the alternative music he wanted to promote through his record label. Ultimately, Hughes Entertainment was more of a priority for Hughes than Hughes Music, and he abandoned the project in order to focus his energies on reorienting his brand during the late 1980s.

Comedians and the Family Audience

After *Some Kind of Wonderful*'s disappointing box office performance, Hughes decided to move away from the teen film genre. As he later put it, his "old demographics had dwindled", leading the studios to pressure him into making films with a wider appeal.⁴⁰² *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* was "the first Hughes-directed and produced film to focus on the travails of adults."⁴⁰³ Although Hughes had already written a successful adult comedy, *National Lampoon's Vacation*, press coverage presented the movie as a significant "break"

³⁹⁹ Goldstein, "John Hughes in the Pink at MCA."

⁴⁰⁰ Simon Frith, "The Industrialisation of Popular Music," in *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*, ed. Simon Frith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 117.

⁴⁰¹ Patrick Goldstein, "Big Deals," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 January 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-01-17/entertainment/ca-36447_1_hughes-music.

⁴⁰² Ham, "Straight Outta Sherman."

⁴⁰³ Bob Strauss, "Steve Martin and John Hughes: Director Graduates to the Adult World," *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 22, 1987, C13.

from his “much-mined teen territory.”⁴⁰⁴ In interviews, the filmmaker downplayed the magnitude of his shift away from teenagers. As one reporter noted, Hughes “refuses to divide his career into teen and adult movies.”⁴⁰⁵ Presumably in an attempt not to alienate his teenage following, Hughes asserted, “I hate to say I’m moving beyond anything, because I don’t want to denigrate that work or that audience...”⁴⁰⁶ *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* was Hughes’ most expensive movie to date, with an estimated final production budget of almost \$30 million.⁴⁰⁷ This budget was above the industry average and particularly high for a comedy, leading one reporter to describe the movie as “Tanen’s most expensive vote of confidence in Hughes.”⁴⁰⁸ Fortunately for Hughes and the distributor, the movie performed well at the domestic box office. Paramount released the movie in the United States on November 25 1987, one day before Thanksgiving. Although it never topped the domestic box office chart, the movie performed well across the holiday season, particularly during Christmas week.⁴⁰⁹ During its run in American theatres, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* grossed roughly \$49.5 million, making it the 21st highest grossing movie of 1987.⁴¹⁰ Although the costs of production eroded Paramount’s profit margin, the R-rated comedy confirmed that Hughes could write, direct and produce movies that appealed to an adult audience.

In order to support the theatrical release of *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, Paramount Pictures mounted a costly publicity campaign, which focused primarily on Martin, Candy and Hughes. In order to stimulate press interest in the movie, Paramount Pictures invited roughly three-hundred domestic and foreign reporters to a press conference in a purpose-built replica of an airport waiting room, on a soundstage at the Paramount lot in Los Angeles.⁴¹¹ In an attempt to promote the film to a young adult audience, the distributor also paid for writers from a number of American universities to be flown-in for the event. Offering a clear indication of the distributor’s interest in the production, Paramount’s head

⁴⁰⁴ “Trailers: *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*,” *Boxoffice*, November 1987, 6.

⁴⁰⁵ Robert Denerstein [Scripps Howard News Service], ‘Comedy explores the nightmare of modern travel’, *The Telegraph* [New Hampshire], December 28, 1987, p. 34

⁴⁰⁶ Strauss, “Steve Martin and John Hughes: Director Graduates to the Adult World.”

⁴⁰⁷ Terri Minsky, “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hughes,” *Premiere*, July 1988.

⁴⁰⁸ Minsky, “Dr Jekyll and Mr Hughes.”

⁴⁰⁹ “*Planes, Trains and Automobiles*: Weekly Box Office,” *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=planestrainsandautomobiles.htm>

⁴¹⁰ *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*: Box Office Summary,” *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=planestrainsandautomobiles.htm>

⁴¹¹ B. J. Franklin, ‘West Coast Week,’ *Screen International*, November 28th, 1987, p. 10

of marketing, Sid Gains, hosted the press event and the studio's president Ned Tanen and chairman Frank Mancuso also made appearances.⁴¹² According to a report in *Screen International*, the assembled journalists were fed a "lavish Thanksgiving repast" whilst waiting for John Candy to arrive, after his plane was delayed.⁴¹³ Steve Martin also performed some of his stand-up material to help pass the time.⁴¹⁴ While clearly an unplanned event, Martin's brief performance served as a reminder of his persona as a comedian and signalled the familiar pleasures that his presence apparently brought to the movie. The symbolic capital that Hughes had accrued through his teen films was in evidence at the event. Noting that college reporters "can sometimes be brutal," one journalist observed that, "If anything, the press conference was an indication of how popular Hughes, Martin and Candy are with young people today. Their questions were close to reverential."⁴¹⁵ In contrast, older journalists seemed to find Hughes lacking in charisma, especially when compared to the film's stars. One reporter observed, "Hughes, who slumped deep down into his chair and responded to questions in a droll monotone voice, looked like he wished he were somewhere else."⁴¹⁶ Similarly, another journalist stated, "Unlike Candy and Martin who wisecracked their way through the gathering, director John Hughes was grave and philosophical."⁴¹⁷

Although *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* offered a promising indication that Hughes could broaden his appeal, his next film, *She's Having A Baby* was a major flop at the U.S. box office. Prior to the film's release, *Variety's* reviewer seemed sceptical about the movie's box office potential:

Planes, Trains and Automobiles moved him beyond his beloved teens and into more satisfying adult territory. Now he's taken a giant step backward with *She's Having A*

⁴¹² B.J. Franklin, 'West Coast Week,' *Screen International*, November 28, 1987, p.10.

⁴¹³ B. J. Franklin, 'West Coast Week,' *Screen International*, November 28th, 1987, p. 10; Frank Sanello [Newspaper Enterprise Assn], 'It's Steve Martin... and John Candy,' *The Robesonian [North Carolina]*, December 13, 1987, p. 4C

⁴¹⁴ Frank Sanello [Newspaper Enterprise Assn], 'It's Steve Martin... and John Candy,' *The Robesonian [North Carolina]*, December 13, 1987, p. 4C

⁴¹⁵ Frank Sanello [Newspaper Enterprise Assn], 'It's Steve Martin... and John Candy,' *The Robesonian [North Carolina]* December 13, 1987p. 4C

⁴¹⁶ John Shea, 'Automobiles stars shift gears,' *The Michigan Daily*, December 2, 1987, p. 7

⁴¹⁷ Frank Sanello (Newspaper Enterprise Association Syndicate), "Comedians go for ride in film," *Rome News Tribune* (Georgia), 4 December 1987, E12.

Baby (filmed prior to *Planes*)... This may narrow, not expand Hughes' b. o. following.⁴¹⁸

Ostensibly aimed at young adults, the movie's release was accompanied by a fairly standard advertising campaign. The movie's star Kevin Bacon took part in a number of interviews with the mainstream press, order to publicise his association with the movie. As he could no longer rely on his established teenage audience, Hughes needed positive reviews to help attract audiences to the movie. However, most critics' responses to the film were lukewarm at best. The aesthetic that Hughes had developed in his teen films was apparently not to the taste of a more mature audience. For instance, reviewer for the Associated Press complained, "one wishes that Hughes would allow his actors and his own dialogue to carry the scenes, instead of overloading them with innocuous pop songs."⁴¹⁹ The film's gender politics proved to be an even bigger stumbling block to the film's commercial prospects. Presumably, by adopting a fairly traditional perspective on marriage, Hughes sought to appeal to a Middle American audience. Kevin Bacon pointed out that "old-fashioned is new-fashioned, let's face it" and Elizabeth McGovern noted that Hughes was "an old-values type of guy in all his movies."⁴²⁰ The filmmaker's approach certainly did not appeal to the *New York Times*' Janet Maslin, who described *She's Having A Baby* as "the most flagrantly sexist film in years."⁴²¹ The critic found the movie's representation of gender roles so objectionable that it prompted her to pen a lengthy article that explained how "misogyny in film may be far from dead."⁴²² While negative press was not the only reason why *She's Having A Baby* failed to find an audience, it certainly did not help the situation. The movie grossed little over \$16 million during its run at the domestic box office and ranked 63rd in the 1988 annual chart.⁴²³

Hughes' commercial success and status within the industry meant that he was now a "celebrity." As a consequence, his career was subject to increased scrutiny and journalists started to show greater interest in his "personality" and private life. He received negative publicity when he joined a group of high-profile writers who "broke with union

⁴¹⁸ "She's Having A Baby," *Variety*, 3 February 1988, 14.

⁴¹⁹ Associated Press, "Hughes uses fresh insights in new film," *Midwest Telegraph Herald*, 29 June 1988, 17D.

⁴²⁰ Claudia Coates, "Virtue plays an important role in *Baby*," *Kentucky New Era*, February 20, 1988, 5B.

⁴²¹ Janet Maslin, "Sexism on Film: The Sequel," *New York Times*, 14 February 1988, H1.

⁴²² Maslin, "Sexism on Film: The Sequel."

⁴²³ "She's Having A Baby: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=sheshavingababy.htm>

leadership” in June 1988 and encouraged WGA members to accept a contract offer from producers, in order to end a sixteen-week scriptwriters’ strike.⁴²⁴ Described by the WGA as “a well-orchestrated press campaign”, the move attracted the censure of other well-known union members, such as Michael Mann, Lawrence Kasdan and Billy Wilder, on the basis that it could “divide and weaken the union.”⁴²⁵ At around the same time, *Premiere* magazine printed an interview with the filmmaker, titled “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hughes.” Terri Minsky’s feature was the first to scrutinize the contradictions in Hughes’ public image and reputation within the industry at length. She observed, “To his audience, Hughes appears to be a keen observer of suburban life, someone with a sense of humor and great taste in music... a pretty hip guy.” In terms of his self-presentation, Hughes presumably learnt from the experience of his 1986 interview with Louise Farr. When Minsky interviewed him at his Paramount offices, he arrived wearing “jeans, a white pullover, high-top sneakers”, the kind of attire he donned for interviews in the early 1980s, and deliberately mocked the “\$1000” replica rocks on his coffee table. As Bob Thomas had noted in his 1985 interview with the filmmaker, Minsky observed that “Hughes’ vision of himself” was closely linked to Norman Rockwell. “He was never taken seriously,” Hughes told Minsky, “I identify with that. I don’t think I’m making any great statements, and I certainly don’t think I’m making art.” However, the journalist referred to various anonymous sources in the industry who claimed that Hughes was extremely difficult to work with. She noted, “Clearly, it’s hard to reconcile the various impressions of John Hughes; his own disingenuous appraisal doesn’t quite mesh with others’ descriptions of him as the temperamental genius or the unpredictable boss.” The difficulties that Hughes experienced in regulating his image in the mainstream and trade press would continue to plague his career in the 1990s. However, there is little evidence to suggest that this kind of coverage was detrimental to either negotiations with the studios or his reputation with audiences.

During 1988, Hughes secured a non-exclusive multi-picture development and production agreement with Universal Pictures. The move was not unexpected because rumours of the deal had been circulating since late July 1987, prior to the release of *Planes, Trains and*

⁴²⁴ Aljean Harmetz, “Striking Writers Clash Over New Contract Offer,” *New York Times*, 22 June 1988, C26.

⁴²⁵ Harmetz, “Striking Writers Clash Over New Contract Offer.” In spite of tensions within the union, WGA members voted 3-1 to reject their employers’ offer and the strike did not formally end until August 7th 1988. Aljean Harmetz, ‘Writers Ratify Contract, Ending Longest Strike,’ *New York Times*, August 8, 1988, C15.

Automobiles and *She's Having A Baby*.⁴²⁶ During this period, Paramount was on the verge of a reshuffle of its senior executives. The *Los Angeles Times* claimed that Dawn Steel and Ned Tanen were both “increasingly bothered by the crush of administrative work” and were often in conflict with one another.⁴²⁷ Clearly, the possible departure of Ned Tanen, one of Hughes’ closest allies at Paramount, threatened to limit the filmmaker’s influence at a senior executive level.⁴²⁸ Although Hughes had expressed animosity towards Universal earlier in the decade, the filmmaker was already working with the studio on *The Great Outdoors* and his record label was connected to MCA records. In a studio press release, Tom Pollock, chairman of the MCA Motion Picture Group, cheerfully announced the filmmaker’s “homecoming.” He proclaimed, “I am delighted that John Hughes is returning to Universal... Very few filmmakers today can create and oversee a motion picture from concept through release with the talent of John Hughes and his company.”⁴²⁹ According to a studio press release, the terms of the contract stated Hughes would “write, direct and produce a minimum of two films”, in addition to supervising the production of two of his scripts.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Michael Cieply, “Creative Tension: Sources See Changes at Paramount,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1987. Online: http://articles.latimes.com/1987-07-31/entertainment/ca-287_1_paramount-spokeswoman

⁴²⁷ Cieply, “Creative Tension: Sources See Changes at Paramount,”

⁴²⁸ As it turned out, Tanen stepped down from his role of Studio President in November 1988. Nina J. Easton, “Tanen Reigns Top Paramount Film Post,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1988. Online: http://articles.latimes.com/1988-11-22/business/fi-317_1_paramount-pictures-top-film

⁴²⁹ “John Hughes Returns to Universal Pictures,” *PR Newswire*, April 20, 1988, LexisNexis.

⁴³⁰ “John Hughes Returns to Universal Pictures.”

Chapter Three

1990s: Family Entertainment and the John Hughes Brand

The box office success of *Home Alone*, as Robert C. Allen notes, “inaugurated... Hollywood’s full embrace of the cross-generational family film” during the early 1990s.⁴³¹ Shortly after *Home Alone*’s theatrical release, box office analyst and *Hollywood Reporter* columnist Martin Grove asserted, “There is a much bigger audience for family entertainment than there is for violence and sex. And Hollywood is finally catching onto it.”⁴³² The U.S. film industry’s renewed focus on family-oriented entertainment arguably sought to combat anxieties concerning children’s access to inappropriate movies. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hollywood faced criticism from a variety of groups that felt the film industry was not making enough films that were suitable for family audiences. “Conveniently for Hollywood,” observes Allen, “the very films that were most consistently profitable across the widest range of markets in the late 1980s and early 1990s... also allowed the film industry to claim that it was family friendly.”⁴³³ During this period conservative and Christian pressure groups mounted various campaigns that criticized the entertainment industry’s alleged lack of interest in protecting children from inappropriate content. For instance, the American Family Association mounted a particularly high-profile campaign to discourage Blockbuster from stocking NC-17 videos.⁴³⁴ The threats also caused other video retailers anxiety that “carrying NC-17 product would make them vulnerable to morality crusaders.”⁴³⁵ In addition, Republican Congressman James Sensenbrenner Jr., acting with the support of conservative organisations, proposed a resolution that would encourage (but not legally oblige) the film industry to provide additional ratings information for parents..⁴³⁶ In response, Jack Valenti, head of the MPAA,

⁴³¹ Robert C. Allen, “Home Alone Together: Hollywood and the ‘family film’,” in *Identifying Hollywood’s Audiences*, eds. Richard Maltby and Melvyn Stokes, London: BFI, 1999, 113. Melinda Gerosa. “Hollywood’s Second Childhood,” *Entertainment Weekly*, 7 December 1990, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,318767,00.html>.

⁴³³ Allen, “Home Alone Together,” 115.

⁴³⁴ Marc Berman, “Wildon & Co. seek to block NC-17 pix at Blockbuster chain,” *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 25; Marc Berman, “NX-17 X’d out at Blockbuster; Wildmon, AFA Boycott lifted,” *Variety*, 21 January 1991, 27.

⁴³⁵ “Vid Retailers Rate NcC-17 at VSDA Confab,” *Variety*, 28 January 1991, 30.

⁴³⁶ “Congressman wants descriptive ratings,” *Variety*, March 4, 1991, 4.

pronounced that groups such as the American Family Association and the Christian Film and Television Commission were “antagonistic to the First Amendment.”⁴³⁷

In January 1992, while surveying the studios’ release plans, *USA Today* claimed that while “the mix of film genres remains much the same”, the main trends for the year were projects with “family appeal” and animated movies, as well as biographical films.⁴³⁸ Similarly, in November 1992, the *New York Times*’ Bernard Weintraub discerned “a new wave of films... that are family-oriented, generally happy or tearful (or both), and rated PG or PG-13”.⁴³⁹ While noting the Republicans’ attacks on Hollywood, journalist Bernard Weintraub argued that the industry’s motives were primarily financial and suggested that concerns about the U.S. economy had “led studios to look for scripts meant to lure the widest possible audience, meaning families.”⁴⁴⁰ Rick Nicita, co-head of Creative Artists motion picture department agreed, stating, “It’s really economic rather than conceptual... A desirable G-rated film has got to make more money than a desirable NC-17.”⁴⁴¹ Indeed, the studios were reluctant to attribute their increased focus on the family market to political considerations. For instance, when Warner Bros. set up its Family Entertainment banner in 1993, a *Variety* article noted, “WB sources hastened to add that shouldn’t be seen as a concession to mounting criticism in the press and on Capitol Hill that Hollywood fare has gotten too violent.”⁴⁴² The article did sound a note of caution that “family movies are not instant moneymakers” and noted that, in the opinion of directors and writers catering to more mature audiences, the trend would be short-lived.⁴⁴³ However, consistent with a wider perception that the film industry had increased family film production, in June 1993 *Newsweek* proclaimed, “Thou Shalt Make More PG Movies has become Hollywood’s 11th commandment.”⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁷ Berman, ‘Wildon & Co. seek to block NC-17.’

⁴³⁸ Tom Green, “’92 at the movies: Hopes high that sequels pay it again,” *USA Today*, 10 January 1992, 1D.

⁴³⁹ Bernard Weintraub, “Hollywood Is Testing Family Values’ Value,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1992, C15.

⁴⁴⁰ Weintraub, “Hollywood Is Testing Family Values’ Value.”

⁴⁴¹ Weintraub, “Hollywood Is Testing Family Values’ Value.”

⁴⁴² Christian Moerk, “Family Volume at WB,” *Daily Variety*, 14 May 1993, 3.

⁴⁴³ Weintraub, “Hollywood Is Testing Family Values’ Value.”

⁴⁴⁴ Jeff Giles with Charles Fleming, “See Kids’ Flix Make Big Bucks,” *Newsweek*, 28 June 1993, 66.

This chapter adopts a more thematic structure than the previous industry chapters. The first section of the chapter discusses John Hughes' relationships with the major studios in the early 1990s and reflects on how he was ideally positioned to take advantage of the U.S. film industry's increased investment in family-oriented movies. The next section focuses on the theatrical releases for John Hughes' family films. I will suggest that the studios' approaches to the distribution of the movie are indicative of the U.S. film industry's belief in the continued importance of the theatrical market during this period. As I will explain, exhibitors also had a keen interest in attracting the family audience. The second half of the chapter considers how Hughes' family films were implicated in developments in the home video, toy and video game markets during the early 1990s. I will reflect on how Hughes' films succeeded in the circulation as brands in media other than film. Evidently, there is a great deal that can be said about the commercial exploitation of each of Hughes' films during this period. This chapter provides an overview of a few key industrial developments. By focusing on specific examples, I can provide a more detailed discussion of how Hughes' films were implicated in the commercial and ideological logics of family entertainment.

John Hughes' Position Within The U.S. Film Industry

Speculation about a sequel to *Home Alone* began in March 1991, when the fate of the project was closely tied to John Hughes' contract negotiations with the major studios. Once 20th Century Fox finalized their deal with Hughes, executives focused on securing Macaulay Culkin's commitment to the project. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Hughes insisted that he would only make the sequel "reassemble all the elements of the first film", including the major cast members.⁴⁴⁵ Following negotiations during early 1991, Fox promised Culkin an estimated fee of \$5 million for the movie, plus 5% of the film's adjusted gross.⁴⁴⁶ In what the *New York Times* described as "an unusual show of zeal", Fox hired the same cast and crew "virtually down to the last gaffer and grip".⁴⁴⁷ The entire central cast remained the same, although some experienced character actors joined the

⁴⁴⁵ David J. Fox, "Off-Centerpiece: Critics Start Your Reviews: John Hughes Talks About *Home Alone* the Sequel," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-04-07/entertainment/ca-121_1_john-hughes.

⁴⁴⁶ The Associated Press, "More Expensive, Commercial Movies for 1992," 23 January 1992, AM cycle.

⁴⁴⁷ William Grimes, '*Home Alone* 2: Sequel Success? Or Pow! Splat!', *New York Times*, November 15, 1992, p. H15

ensemble, including Tim Curry, Brenda Fricker and Eddie Bracken. On the production side, Chris Columbus returned as director, Julio Macat as cinematographer, Raja Gosnell as editor, Freddie Hice as stunt coordinator, John Williams as composer and Jay Hurley as costume designer. John Muto, production designer on *Home Alone*, was the most senior member of the original team who did not return for the sequel. The similarities between *Home Alone 2* and its predecessor were not limited to the cast and crew, however. In a November 1992 interview, John Hughes explained that he had deliberately created a narrative that was very similar to the original *Home Alone*. “I had to make a story using the same characters in the same situation with the same antagonists,” he noted.⁴⁴⁸ Thus, Hughes and Fox ensured as many of the “pre-sold” elements that had apparently contributed to the original movie’s success remained the same.

When Warner Bros. officially launched their Family Entertainment banner in May 1993, they confirmed that John Hughes production, *Dennis the Menace*, would be the first film to be released under the brand. The studio had already announced the project in July 1991, when it confirmed that Hughes would “produce” and “creatively supervise” a movie based upon Hank Ketcham’s *Dennis the Menace* comic strip.⁴⁴⁹ Warner Bros gave Hughes almost complete control over the project. For instance, when the movie’s director, Patrick Reed Johnson, quit the project following “creative differences” the trade press speculated that his resignation was due to Hughes’ insistence on closely supervising the production process.⁴⁵⁰ Johnson’s replacement, Nick Castle, was presumably more amenable to collaborating with the producer. Explaining their decision to use *Dennis the Menace* to launch their brand, a senior Warner Bros. executive stated that the movie “embodies the spirit and the appeal of our new label.”⁴⁵¹ He added, “John Hughes has given movie audiences many films where timeless humour crosses all age boundaries and presents a world in which families, and especially kids, are celebrated.”⁴⁵² When Warner Bros originally announced that it would set up a Family Entertainment label, *Variety* suggested the move was symptomatic of “industry-wide awareness that survival in the 1990s may be a matter of

⁴⁴⁸ John Hughes, Quoted in: William Grimes, ‘*Home Alone 2: Sequel Success? Or Pow! Splat!*,’ *New York Times*, November 15, 1992, p. H20.

⁴⁴⁹ “John Hughes to Produce Live-Action *Dennis the Menace* Feature For Warner Bros,” *PR Newswire*, July 18, 1991, LexisNexis Academic.

⁴⁵⁰ Claudia Eller, “John Hughes signs deal with WB,” *Daily Variety*, 1 July 1992, 3.

⁴⁵¹ “Warner Bros. Announces Creation of Family Entertainment Label,” *PR Newswire*, 13 May 1993. LexisNexis.

⁴⁵² “Warner Bros. Announces Creation of Family Entertainment Label.”

creating wholesome, family-oriented entertainment.”⁴⁵³ Consistent with broader trends in family entertainment, an ambitious commercial strategy underpinned the studio’s ostensibly “ideological” move. Through the establishment of a banner that covered “film, video, television, animation, recorded music, consumer products, theme parks, live entertainment and interactive media,” Warner Bros. sought to adopt a more coordinated approach to developing synergies within the corporation.⁴⁵⁴ While the studio did not acknowledge it explicitly, the press suggested that Disney Corporation’s highly lucrative approach to brand exploitation was the model that Warner Bros was trying to replicate. As an *Associated Press* article noted, the Family Entertainment brand was “more than just a label for new films”; it was “a way to distinguish products that can be cross-marketed.”⁴⁵⁵ The difference between Warner Bros. and Disney, however, was that Warner Bros. focused on live-action movies. Their appointment of Hughes was clearly an attempt not only to profit from association with the John Hughes brand, but also to utilize his expertise in the development of projects that could generate revenues in ancillary markets.

After the success of the *Home Alone* franchise, 20th Century Fox clearly had high expectations of *Baby’s Day Out*, John Hughes’ next project for the studio. Hughes acted as creative producer and screenwriter and appointed Patrick Reed John as director. Fox allocated the project a blockbuster-level production budget of \$50 million, in spite of the fact that there were no major stars involved.⁴⁵⁶ This money was spent on “one of the biggest sets ever built”, “the most visual effects and stunts ever utilized on a Hughes movie” (including computer-generated imagery) and “eleven different mechanical dolls.”⁴⁵⁷ In studio publicity materials, Hughes described the film as “the culmination of all our technological know-how, our stunt skill and our comic talents.”⁴⁵⁸ Given the relatively limited appeal of the movie, the sizeable budget reflected Hughes’ elevated status at the studio and that Fox were willing to gamble on his ability to create another major box office hit, of the same magnitude as *Home Alone*. The studio’s expenditure on the movie was also a reaction to increased competition for family audiences. While Hughes’ previous successes

⁴⁵³ Charles Fleming, “New plan to put Warners in Family way,” *Variety*, 9 December 1991, 1.

⁴⁵⁴ “Warner Bros. Announces Creation of Family Entertainment Label.”

⁴⁵⁵ E. Scott Reckard, “Warner Creates Family Entertainment Umbrella for Wholesome Fare,” *Associated Press*, 13 May 1993, LexisNexis Academic.

⁴⁵⁶ Leonard Klady, “Summer Pix: Snaps, Crackles & Flops,” *Variety*, 29 August 1994 – 4 September 1994, 1.

⁴⁵⁷ Twentieth Century Fox, “Production Information: Baby’s Day Out,” 1994, 4.

⁴⁵⁸ “Production Information: Baby’s Day Out,” 4.

had been modestly budgeted comedies, Fox presumably felt that special effects and higher production values would add to the movie's appeal and differentiate it from the growing number of low and mid-budget family and child-oriented comedies that often replicated the pratfalls that had made *Home Alone* so popular. The trade press seemed to share Fox's confidence in Hughes' ability to create a box office hit. Almost entirely on the basis of the filmmaker's association with the project, *Variety* suggested that *Baby's Day Out* was one of "the strongest box office contenders" on the Fox's production slate during this period.⁴⁵⁹

While *Baby's Day Out* was in production, 20th Century Fox announced that Hughes would write and produce a remake of the 1947 movie *Miracle on 34th Street*. In order to ensure that the film had production-values befitting of a prestigious release, the studio allocated Hughes a substantial budget of \$28 million.⁴⁶⁰ Again, Hughes produced and wrote the script, which was adapted from George Seaton's screenplay, and Les Mayfield directed. Hughes encountered significant difficulties when Macy's refused to participate in his remake of *Miracle on 34th Street*. The department store is integral to the narrative of the 1947 version of the film and the mainstream press presented their decision to decline the product placement as a significant blow to the production because it would reduce the remake's fidelity to the original. A spokeswoman for Macy's declared, "We feel the original stands on its own and could not be improved upon."⁴⁶¹ However, newspapers speculated that the retailer's refusal to participate might have been due to anxiety that a plotline concerning the store's financial difficulties would draw attention to the company's debts of "nearly \$6 billion".⁴⁶² Hughes pointed out that Macy's decision was unusual because companies were often keen to appear in mainstream Hollywood movies: "This is sort of unique, someone turning down a product placement."⁴⁶³ It seems probable that Macy's absence from the film increased production costs because the studio had to stage and shoot their own Thanksgiving Day parade, closing down a whole block in Manhattan, and

⁴⁵⁹ Judy Brennan and John Evan Frook, "Bright Lights May Clear Fog At Fox," *Variety*, 11 October 1993 – 17 October 1993, 1.

⁴⁶⁰ Susan Spillman, "John Hughes revives a Christmas *Miracle*," *USA Today*, 25 October 1993, 4D; Beth Laski, "Miracle Refund Promo produces few takers," *Daily Variety*, 7 December 1994, 6.

⁴⁶¹ Jane Galbraith, "Reluctant Macy's Rains on New *Miracle on 34th Street*'s Parade," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 April 1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-17/entertainment/ca-47060_1_34th-street.

⁴⁶² Galbraith, "Reluctant Macy's Rains on New *Miracle on 34th Street*'s Parade." Elliott, 'A New *Miracle on 34th Street*,' D1.

⁴⁶³ Elliot, "A New *Miracle on 34th Street*," D21.

had to build a number of large sets from scratch. The situation demonstrated that even a major producer like Hughes could not guarantee the participation of companies in product placement activities.

The early 1990s arguably marked the culmination of John Hughes' strategic pursuit of creative control and power within the U.S. film industry. The studios gave Hughes a high level of autonomy over these projects, all of which, with the exception of *Home Alone 2*, he shot in Chicago. In order to ensure that the films were consistent with the Hughes brand, and reflected his creative and commercial priorities, he appointed directors with relatively little experience and supervised their work closely. 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros spending on these films shows how industry-wide production trends can lead to increased competition for a particular audience, which in turn can contribute to budget inflation. Although in theory families could increase the frequency of their visits to the cinema, the costs associated with watching films in a theatre and the availability of movies on video limited any significant growth in the theatrical market. A film's theatrical release remained important, however. Not only because it determined the value of a movie in other markets but also because, as Frederick Wasser notes, "the theatrical release provided the advertising that pushed the product through its many subsequent markets."⁴⁶⁴ The branding of individual movies was crucial in helping them to stand out in a highly crowded home video marketplace. Theatrical revenues could also provide studios with a sudden injection of cash, which was significant because revenues from international and ancillary markets were not particularly predictable. The returns from these markets were often subject to time delays and would "trickle in over two to seven years."⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video*, 171.

⁴⁶⁵ Richard Natale, "Hollywood's 'new math': Does it still add up?" *Variety*, 23 September 1991, 95.

Chart 7: Box Office Grosses of John Hughes' Family Films 1990– 2001

	U.S. Distributor	U.S. Release Date	Opening Weekend Number of Theatres	Opening Weekend Domestic Gross	Opening Weekend Box Office Ranking	Total Domestic Gross	U.S. Annual Box Office Chart Ranking	Total International Gross
<i>Home Alone</i>	Fox	16 Nov 1990	1,202	\$17,081,997	1	\$285,761,243	1	\$190,923,432
<i>Curly Sue</i>	Warner Bros.	25 Oct 1991	1,634	\$4,974,958	2	\$33,691,313	41	-
<i>Home Alone 2</i>	Fox	20 Nov 1992	2,222	\$31,126,882	1	\$173,585,516	2	\$185,409,334
<i>Beethoven</i>	Universal	3 Apr 1992	1,688	\$7,587,565	3	\$57,114,049	26	\$90,100,000
<i>Dennis the Menace</i>	Warner Bros	25 Jun 1993	2,085	\$9,331,139	3	\$51,270,765	24	\$66,000,000
<i>Baby's Day Out</i>	Fox	1 Jul 1994	1,705	\$4,044,662	9	\$16,827,402	83	-
<i>Miracle on 34th Street</i>	Fox	18 Nov 1994	1,190	\$2,753,208	8	\$17,320,136	81	\$28,944,248
<i>101 Dalmatians</i>	Buena Vista	27 Nov 1996	2,794	\$33,504,025	1	\$136,189,294	6	\$184,500,000
<i>Flubber</i>	Buena Vista	26 Nov 1997	2,641	\$26,725,207	1	\$92,977,226	18	\$86,000,000
<i>Home Alone 3</i>	Fox	12 Dec 1997	2,147	\$5,085,482	4	\$30,882,515	69	\$48,200,000
<i>Just Visiting</i>	Buena Vista	6 Apr 2001	1,590	\$2,272,489	12	\$4,781,539	150	\$11,395,193

Data Source: Boxofficemojo.com

Theatrical releases of Hughes' Family Films

Warner Bros seemed to take an active interest in managing the releases of *Curly Sue* and *Dennis the Menace*. The distributor's strategic approach to the release of *Curly Sue* helped to maximize theatrical revenues. Warner Bros opened the movie on 1,634 screens on 25th October 1991, four weeks before the highly competitive Thanksgiving weekend.⁴⁶⁶ Although *Curly Sue* only grossed a "mediocre" \$5 million in its opening week, the distributor decided to increase their advertising spending because attendance started to increase in the second week and the movie generated "favourable exit interviews", consistent with test screenings.⁴⁶⁷ Via Warner Bros's unusual strategy, *Curly Sue* became "one of the few movies to grow in the modern day market without adding screens" and, as *Variety* noted, developed "word of mouth and hit perception".⁴⁶⁸ The movie topped the domestic box office chart during its third week on release, but struggled once competition for family audiences increased during late November and December.⁴⁶⁹ *Curly Sue* grossed over \$33 million at the domestic box office and ranked 41st in the 1991 annual chart.⁴⁷⁰ The studio heavily invested in the promotion of *Dennis the Menace*. Although the movie's total domestic gross of roughly \$51 million meant it was not a hit of the same magnitude as the *Home Alone* films, Warner Bros told *Variety* that they were pleased because they had expected the film's "appeal to be more limited."⁴⁷¹

20th Century Fox, understandably, opened *Home Alone 2* on over 2,000 screens in the U.S. and Canada. The distributor supported the movie's release with an extensive marketing campaign and benefited from large amounts of publicity in the mainstream press. The movie grossed roughly \$173 million at the U.S. box office and ranked 2nd in the 1992 annual U.S. box office, after Disney's *Aladdin*.⁴⁷² Whereas Fox was able to capitalize on *Home Alone 2*'s status as a sequel to the highest grossing comedy of all time, the next John Hughes production that the studio distributed was based on an original concept. Released

⁴⁶⁶ Natale, "WB Pic Proves There's Life After First Week," 3.

⁴⁶⁷ Natale, "WB Pic Proves There's Life After First Week," 3.

⁴⁶⁸ Natale, "WB Pic Proves There's Life After First Week," 3, 5.

⁴⁶⁹ "Curly Sue: Weekly Box Office" *Box Office Mojo*,
<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=curlysue.htm>.

⁴⁷⁰ "Curly Sue: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*,
<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=curlysue.htm>.

⁴⁷¹ Leonard Klady, "Sleepless Awakens to \$17 mil," *Daily Variety*, 28 June 1993, 1.

⁴⁷² "Home Alone 2: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*,
<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=homealone2.htm>.

on the 1st July 1994, *Baby's Day Out* grossed less than \$6 million in its opening week at U.S. box office.⁴⁷³ *Variety* noted that the movie's weak opening came as a surprise because "John Hughes' films are usually surefire formulas for printing money."⁴⁷⁴ A major disappointment for Hughes and for Fox, *Baby's Day Out* grossed less than \$17 million during its domestic theatrical release.⁴⁷⁵ By the end of the summer, *Variety* claimed that the movie had lost Fox millions of dollars, noting that box office revenues "won't even cover marketing expenses".⁴⁷⁶ After the weak box office performance of *Baby's Day Out*, which the studio released earlier that year, Fox evidently felt that it was better to be cautious, especially given that *Miracle on 34th Street* had a narrower appeal than Hughes' slapstick comedies. 20th Century Fox's decision to open *Miracle on 34th Street* on only 1,190 screens can be attributed to several factors, not least the large amount of competition for the family audience during the holiday season. *Miracle on 34th Street* grossed roughly \$4.3 million in its opening week at the U.S. box office, coming 7th in the weekly chart.⁴⁷⁷ In spite of 20th Century Fox's attempts to generate publicity for the movie, *Miracle on 34th Street* grossed little more than \$17 million during its domestic release.⁴⁷⁸

Universal's release strategy for *Beethoven* was clearly an opportunistic attempt to cash in on a project associated with John Hughes. When Hughes left the studio, they retained the screenplay for *Beethoven*, a family comedy about a St Bernard. The filmmaker agreed to the deal on the condition that his identity remained confidential. Consequently, the final movie credited Amy Holden Jones and Edmond Dantes with writing the screenplay. However, as the *New York Times*' Caryn James observed, "it is an open secret that *Beethoven* and *Home Alone* share the same creator."⁴⁷⁹ Universal gave *Beethoven* a wide release, opening it across 1,688 screens on 3rd April 1992, in spite of the fact that there were no major stars in the movie and it was not based on a pre-sold property. By releasing the movie during an "off-

⁴⁷³ "Baby's Day Out: Weekly Box Office," *Box Office Mojo*,

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=babysdayout.htm>

⁴⁷⁴ Leonard Klady, "Distributors need some late summer sizzle," *Variety*, 11 July 1994 – 17 July 1994, 1.

⁴⁷⁵ "Baby's Day Out: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=babysdayout.htm>.

⁴⁷⁶ Klady, "Summer Pix."

⁴⁷⁷ "Miracle on 34th Street: Weekly Box Office," *Box Office Mojo*,

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=miracleon34thstreet.htm>.

⁴⁷⁸ "Miracle on 34th Street: Box Office Summary," *Box Office Mojo*,

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=miracleon34thstreet.htm>.

⁴⁷⁹ Caryn James, 'Bit vs. Bark Or *Beethoven* Vs. *Ferngully*,' *New York Times*, May 17, 1992, p.

peak” period, the distributor took advantage of the fact that there was very little competition for the family audience. Steven Spielberg’s *Hook* and Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* were the only other family-oriented films in the box office top twenty and both movies had in cinemas for over four months. Although 20th Century Fox released *Fern Gully: The Last Rainforest* a week after *Beethoven* debuted, the environmentally-conscious animation proved to be less popular. The studio also promoted the film aggressively, through print advertising and television spots. Universal’s gamble paid off and the movie grossed \$57 million in its run at the domestic box office, making it the 6th most successful PG-rated film of 1992.⁴⁸⁰ While John Hughes did not receive any official credit for *Beethoven*, industry insiders were undoubtedly aware of the role he played in its creation and the film therefore acted as confirmation of his ability to create hit family films.

Foreign markets accounted for a significant proportion of the box office revenues from John Hughes 1990s movies. *Home Alone 2*, *Beethoven*, *Dennis the Menace*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *101 Dalmatians*, *Home Alone 3* and *Just Visiting* all grossed more overseas than in the domestic market (see Chart 7) The films’ successes confirmed that Hughes’ signature blend of broad slapstick humour, populist sentiment and nostalgic Americana could attract sizeable audiences outside of the United States. *Miracle on 34th Street*’s box office performance in the United Kingdom, for example, suggested how the film’s positioning in the market, via publicity campaigns tailored to local audiences, could contribute to box office success. The movie topped the British box office for two weeks in December 1994.⁴⁸¹ The movie’s selection as the 1994 Royal Film Performance, Richard Attenborough’s central role, and the lack of a British release for Disney’s *The Santa Clause* all appear to have contributed to the movie’s popularity with British audiences. The fact that 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros invested in relatively wide foreign releases for these movies, which would have involved significant financial outlay for marketing campaigns and prints, offers a clear indication that the major Hollywood studios saw family entertainment as a readily exportable commodity.

⁴⁸⁰ “Beethoven: Box Office Summary,” *Box Office Mojo*, <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=beethoven.htm>

⁴⁸¹ “Miracle on 34th Street: Box Office Summary.”

“You can take the whole family”: Making cinema a family experience

The Hollywood family films were arguably part of an established project to attract family audiences back to cinemas. During the late 1980s, the major film distributors put pressure on theatre owners to make their facilities more family-friendly, by focusing on cleanliness, customer service and the provision of “total entertainment.”⁴⁸² Realising this vision for cinemas in the United States became relatively feasible due to the domination of the exhibition sector by a few large chains, with the majority of screens located in multiplex complexes. By 1988, just eight companies controlled 40% of the screens in the America and Canada.⁴⁸³ The major chains, most notably Cineplex, renovated older cinemas and continued to develop new multiplex venues, which acted as the central hub of many new “lifestyle centres.”⁴⁸⁴ These sites housed various family-friendly restaurants and shops, as well as other leisure activities such as ten pin bowling and laser tag. The multiplex, observes Janet Harbord, “was defined against both home entertainment and former cinema culture.”⁴⁸⁵ The experience of attending the cinema, as opposed to watching a movie on television, became a major selling point for these venues. The newer multiplexes cinemas were equipped with state-of-the-art equipment “designed to maximise the corporal, sensory affect of cinema.”⁴⁸⁶ Importantly, multi-screen set-up offered choice, potentially allowing different members of the same family to watch different movies at the same time. Many of the independent theatres also invested in their facilities in order to remain competitive.⁴⁸⁷ These more family-oriented spaces, suggests Charles Acland, sought to “replace the unruliness of teenagers with a brand of bourgeois civility.”⁴⁸⁸

The major film distributors and exhibition chains placed particular emphasis on attracting family audiences to U.S. cinemas during the late 1980s and early 1990s. There were strong economic motives underpinning this business strategy. At the start of the 1990s, the U.S. film industry began to express concern about the stagnation of the theatrical market. During 1991, cinema admissions fell to under 1 billion for the first time since 1976, a drop

⁴⁸² Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 92.

⁴⁸³ Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 99.

⁴⁸⁴ Robert J. Gibbs, *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2012), 15.

⁴⁸⁵ Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures* (London: SAGE, 2002), 52.

⁴⁸⁶ Harbord, *Film Cultures*, 52

⁴⁸⁷ Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video*, 137.

⁴⁸⁸ Acland, *Screen Traffic*, 118.

that seemed to be caused by the impact of the 1989-1990 Recession.⁴⁸⁹ Exhibitors were hit harder than the major distributors, whose aggressive pursuit of licensing deals during the late 1980s meant that their share of box office profits grew from 35% to 45% in 1986 to 60% in 1991, at the exhibitors' expense.⁴⁹⁰ During 1991, according to data collected by film distributors, although movie attendance in New York and Los Angeles remained relatively consistent, box office takings declined substantially in the southern states and industrial cities that had been heavily affected by the recession, such as Pittsburgh.⁴⁹¹ Perhaps of more concern to exhibitors, drops in attendance led to corresponding falls in profits from concession stands.⁴⁹² At some theatres, sales of popcorn, soda and other concession stand items accounted for as much as 90% of profits.⁴⁹³ Given the apparent erosion of working-class audiences and growing importance of spending on popcorn, soda and other sundries, it was unsurprising that the major distributors and theatre chains felt that the affluent family audience could help revive the exhibition sector during the early 1990s.

Two movies linked to Hughes, *Beethoven* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, featured in promotions that were devised by the films' distributors in order to increase cinema attendance. In 1992, Universal included *Beethoven* in a promotion that offered consumers half-price tickets on Tuesdays at certain theatre chains. The strategy aimed to increase mid-week cinema attendance, which Universal claimed had, on average, dropped to below forty admissions per day per cinema.⁴⁹⁴ Although Universal declared the half-price ticket campaign a success, citing reports from Cineplex Odeon and Carmike theatres that attendance increased on Tuesdays, the company withdrew the offer after two months, claiming that it "simply could not be sustained without the support of other distributors."⁴⁹⁵ In 1994, in response to *Miracle on 34th Street*'s lackluster debut at the U.S. box office, 20th Century Fox resorted to what *Variety* termed an "unusual and unprecedented marketing ploy".⁴⁹⁶ During the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, the studio guaranteed that customers "not delighted by the

⁴⁸⁹ A. D. Murphy, "Ticket sales to fall to a 15-year low," *Variety*, 15 December 1991, 5.

⁴⁹⁰ Charles Fleming, "Snackbar Slowdown Bitter Pill For Exhibs," *Variety*, 21 January 1991, 93; Richard Gold, "U.S. overscreened? Not for mega-hits," *Variety*, 28 January 1991, 60.

⁴⁹¹ Charles Fleming and Richard Natale, "Can Arnold terminate b.o. blahs?" *Variety*, 8 July 1991, 69.

⁴⁹² Fleming, "Snackbar Slowdown Bitter Pill For Exhibs," 3.

⁴⁹³ Fleming, "Snackbar Slowdown Bitter Pill For Exhibs," 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Dave McNary, "Universal ends half-price ticket experiment," *United Press International*, 9 April 1992. LexisNexis Academic.

⁴⁹⁵ McNary, "Universal ends half-price ticket experiment."

⁴⁹⁶ Beth Laski, "*Miracle* or money back," *Daily Variety*, 23 November 1994, 1.

film” could receive a full refund by sending their ticket stubs to the studio.⁴⁹⁷ Bill Mechanic, the head of Fox, explained the studio’s reasoning, “There are a lot of choices in the marketplace... What we’re saying is ‘Try it. If you don’t like it, you’re not out anything.’”⁴⁹⁸ Various national publications printed articles that drew attention to the promotion and Fox included details of the offer on their print advertisements (see Image 45).⁴⁹⁹ Although the offer cost the studio tens of thousands of dollars, this sum was meagre in comparison to the costs of producing and promoting the movie and the stunt generated considerable free publicity for the struggling film.⁵⁰⁰ While Universal’s promotion sought to encourage cinema attendance more generally, 20th Century Fox devised in order to increase ticket sales for a particular film, *Miracle on 34th Street*. Even so, the gimmicks devised for both films, and the financial outlay that they involved, indicate how the family audience was important to both exhibitors and distributors during the early 1990s.

⁴⁹⁷ “Fox offers *Miracle* guarantee,” *United Press International*, 22 November 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

⁴⁹⁸ Laski, “*Miracle* or money back,” 1

⁴⁹⁹ See, for example: Arlene Vigoda, “Rush’s Turkey Day,” *USA Today*, 23 November 1994, 1D; Lois Romano, “The Reliable Source,” *Washington Post*, 23 November 1994, D3.

⁵⁰⁰ Beth Laski, “*Miracle* Refund Promo produces few takers,” *Daily Variety*, 7 December 1994, 6; “Holiday *Miracle*,” *Business Wire*, 6 December 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 45 – *Miracle on 34th Street* promotion, *New York Times*, 23 November 1994, C16.

In December 1990s, *Hollywood Reporter's* Martin Grove observed, "Baby boomers are looking to share the experience of being at a movie with their children... And films with children in them are what these audiences want to see."⁵⁰¹ Family films provided the multiplex cinemas with obviously family-oriented product and helped to reinforce the perception of cinema-going as a family activity. As major Hollywood family films, Hughes' movies were obviously implicated in this broader trend. For instance, when Richard Attenborough appeared on CBS' *This Morning* to promote *Miracle on 34th Street*, he stated, "You can take the whole family. It's... a family outing film. And I don't find family entertainment something to be derided."⁵⁰² While it may not have been intentional, the business strategies of the modern multiplex cinemas were consistent with wider ideological agendas. Acland argues that, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, multiplex cinemas were part of a broader trend of creating leisure spaces that confirmed the "naturalization of reigning discourses of family, entertainment and public space."⁵⁰³ In many respects, this process was covert. As Mark Jancovich notes, the impression that modern multiplexes were family-friendly spaces, which provided a "safe environment" for children and teenagers, was a major factor in their success.⁵⁰⁴ Few questions were raised about what these cinemas were keeping children "safe" from, or who their clientele was.

The Hughes Brand and Ancillary Markets

During the 1980s, John Hughes had built his career on his understanding of how to identify and exploit commercial opportunities. By the early 1990s, all of the major studios were integrated into large entertainment conglomerates. The logic of "synergy" had become an integral part of the filmmaking process. Although, successfully exploiting films in a range of markets remained a relatively hit and miss affair. The growth of home video and other outlets such as cable in the previous decade meant that filmmaking seemed to be more consistently profitable. According to *Variety*, by late 1991, the U.S. theatrical box office accounted for just 20% of a typical film's overall revenues, but as many as 70% of

⁵⁰¹ Gerosa, "Hollywood's Second Childhood."

⁵⁰² CBS. *This Morning*. 22 November 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

⁵⁰³ Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 203.

⁵⁰⁴ Mark Jancovich, "The Best Place to See A Film: The blockbuster, the multiplex and contexts of consumption," in *Movie Blockbusters*, ed. Julian Stringer (New York: Routledge, 2003), 196.

films made a profit, compared to 20% in 1981.⁵⁰⁵ The majority of studio income came from home video, television rights and overseas markets. This situation meant that Hollywood became ever more preoccupied with the branding of films and their ability to be repurposed in a range of contexts. The family film turned out to be ideally suited to this purpose. From the late 1970s onwards, as Paul Grainge observes, “From *Star Wars* to *Shrek*, *Home Alone* to *Harry Potter*, family entertainment has been at the forefront of Hollywood’s contemporary industrial strategies and branding efforts.”⁵⁰⁶ The interests of the studio’s potential corporate partners also fuelled the industry’s emphasis on family “brands.” During the 1990s, concepts such as “brand-identity” and the “message” of a film were of growing importance during the deal-making process.⁵⁰⁷ As *Variety* explained in 1991, “Many within Hollywood’s marketing ranks simply don’t have the experience required to manage the many areas sophisticated marketing now demands: Research, merchandising, licensing and promotional product tie-ins.”⁵⁰⁸ With his background in advertising and his wealth of experience selling films in ancillary markets, John Hughes was ideally positioned to take advantage of the opportunities to turn his films into fully fledged multimedia brands.

“Wow! What A Difference!”: Selling Home Video to Families

The maturation of the home video market, as Robert C. Allen notes, was significant factor in Hollywood’s increased investment in family-oriented entertainment.⁵⁰⁹ VCR penetration in the United States had continued to grow throughout the 1980s. A survey conducted in February 1991 suggested that 76.6% of American households with a TV owned a VCR.⁵¹⁰ On average, Americans were spending more money on renting and buying videos than on attending the cinema. During 1990, the “average video household” spent \$120 on rentals and roughly \$42 on sell-through purchases.⁵¹¹ Although the rate of the home video market’s expansion had slowed, income from home video accounted for an ever-higher

⁵⁰⁵ Richard Natale, “Hollywood’s ‘new math’: Does it still add up?” *Variety*, September 23, 1991, 1.

⁵⁰⁶ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 49.

⁵⁰⁷ Anne Thompson, “Studios shifting to Mad Ave’s savvy sell,” *Variety*, 4 April 1991, 87.

⁵⁰⁸ Thompson, “Studios shifting to Mad Ave’s savvy sell.”

⁵⁰⁹ Allen, “Home Alone Together,” 113.

⁵¹⁰ “VCR Penetration Climbs to 76.6%,” *Variety*, 13 May 1991, 45.

⁵¹¹ Marc Berman, “Sell-Through Revs Up,” *Variety*, 18 February 1991, 30.

proportion of film industry revenues. The early 1990s marked the shift to sell-through pricing in the United States, although renting videos remained popular. The major film studios' dominance of the home video market in the United States clearly fuelled the emphasis on blockbuster hits and videos that could be shifted in large quantities. The majors had strengthened their position within the video industry during the late 1980s and set up specialist divisions dedicated to handling the marketing and distribution of titles. By August 1991, the major film studios accounted for 93% of the wholesale video business, with Warner Home Video, Fox Video and Buena Vista Home Video leading the market.⁵¹² Family entertainment clearly fit within the studios plans to further develop the video sell-through market.

Warner Bros, for instance, placed *Dennis the Menace* at the centre of its fledgling "Family Entertainment" label, a brand which had particular significance in the home video market. The company packaged its cassettes in plastic, clamshell cases rather than cardboard sleeves. The use of more durable packaging, an approach pioneered by Disney, presented the video as a collectable item that could withstand children's repeated handling, and therefore encouraged parents to purchase the video. The movie was part of a regular release roster, which saw Warners release a new Family Entertainment video every two months supported by "an aggressive multimillion dollar marketing campaign that includes advertising on all four TV networks and cable, rebates and coupons for other Warner products, and free collectables."⁵¹³ According to *Billboard*, Warners' strategic approach to marketing *Dennis the Menace* and its Family Entertainment line was part of a wider trend of video producers launching "family oriented sell-through lines with ambitious, Disneyesque marketing campaigns."⁵¹⁴

In May 1993, the chief of Warner Bros, Robert A. Daly proclaimed, "We believe that Warner Bros. has, both in its libraries and in its current and future programming capabilities, a valuable heritage on which to develop entertainment and entertainment-related products for children and families."⁵¹⁵ During the early 1990s, the entertainment

⁵¹² Marc Berman, "Majors Snare Lions Share Of Shrinking Wholesale Market," *Variety*, 19 August 1991, 28; Marc Berman, "*Home Alone* Takes Fox to Vid Pinnacle," *Variety*, 7 October 1991, 36.

⁵¹³ Trudi Miller Rosenblum, "Suppliers Aim Kid Vids At Parents," *Billboard*, 25 June 1994, 43.

⁵¹⁴ Rosenblum, "Suppliers Aim Kid Vids At Parents,"

⁵¹⁵ "Warner Bros. Announces Creation of Family Entertainment Label."

corporations' commercial exploitation of their film libraries, particularly through video releases, fuelled the emphasis on studio brands and the repackaging of older titles as family entertainment.⁵¹⁶ A 1994 advertisement aimed at retailers (Image 46) reinforces the centrality of home video to the Warner Family Entertainment brand, stating that the label has "strong roots in home video." Suggesting an attempt foster brand recognition, the Warner Family Entertainment logo featured prominently advertisement and retailers were advised that "To Make Big Bucks Look For Bugs Bunny In His 'Tux!'" The advertisement also referenced Warner Bros' history in the entertainment business, by announcing that "the newest name in family entertainment is an old friend." Warner Bros evocation of brand quality sought to distance the Hollywood studio from many of the companies producing cheap children's entertainment. In a 1993 press release, the studio explained that the logo was "inspired by Warner Bros.' long history of popular media products for the enjoyment of children and families."⁵¹⁷ As Paul Grainge notes, the major studios use their logos "to associate themselves with cinema's past and experiential pleasures in the present."⁵¹⁸ In this particular instance, Warner Bros attempted to draw attention to its family-friendly heritage in order to sell a range of movies and television shows on video. The rebranding of older titles as "timeless favourite hits" within the Family Entertainment brand was symptomatic of the major studios' focus on, as Barbara Klinger puts it, "revitalizing old properties within contemporary taste markets" by "giving them new sellable, historical identities."⁵¹⁹ The vigour with which Warners and, to varying extents, the other major Hollywood studios promoted their family titles was, in part a reaction to the changing retail environment for home video.

⁵¹⁶ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 78.

⁵¹⁷ "Warner Bros. Announces Creation of Family Entertainment Label."

⁵¹⁸ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 86.

⁵¹⁹ Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 94.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 46 – Advertisement for Warner Family Entertainment Video, *Billboard*, 10 December 1994, 85.

During the early 1990s, three companies dominated home video retail in the United States: Blockbuster, Wal-Mart and K-Mart. These corporations had a significant impact on the nature of the home video market during the early 1990s and, by 1992, accounted for more than half of all video sales in the U.S.⁵²⁰ By the start of the decade, Blockbuster was the leading video rental chain in the United States, with nearly 1,300 stores. In 1989, Blockbuster's revenues totaled \$600 million and, by mid-1990, 12 million people in the United States had a Blockbuster membership.⁵²¹ The corporation had grown rapidly during the late 1980s, under the direction of a management team whose aggressive approach to expansion drew heavily on McDonalds' business model.⁵²² Blockbuster continued to expand throughout the early 1990s, in spite of skepticism about the longevity of the rental market. However, the U.S. video industry's shift to a sell-through model during the early 1990s, meant that the major supermarket chains became increasingly important outlets for home video. In 1992, after Blockbuster, K-Mart and Wal-Mart were the U.S. businesses generating the greatest revenues from home video rentals and sales.⁵²³ As a consequence, the entertainment industry started to pay greater attention to the needs of the supermarkets, which, according to *Advertising Age* were "the fastest growing channel for the maturing \$17 billion home video business".⁵²⁴ By 1994, grocery stores accounted for sell-through sales worth \$695 million and the video companies had started selling directly to the major chains, who received discounts for buying in bulk.⁵²⁵ Significantly for Hollywood, these corporations had built their brands in relation to a set of "family" values and expected the studios to provide products that fit within their business and ideological agendas.

Blockbuster spent considerable amounts of money to bolster its brand image as "America's Family Video Store". Blockbuster's brightly lit, clean and carefully designed stores were usually located in suburban communities. The typical store stocked an average of 10,000

⁵²⁰ William Grimes, "Reviewing the NC-17 Film Rating," *New York Times*, 30 November 1992, C11.

⁵²¹ Alan Citron, "Blockbuster vs. the World," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-07-22/business/fi-980_1_southern-california-video.

⁵²² Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, 128.

⁵²³ Russell Smith, "Magazine Ranks Blockbuster Top Video-Rental retailer," *The Dallas Morning News*, 15 January 1993, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1993-01-15/features/9301030796_1_blockbuster-entertainment-west-coast-video-video-store

⁵²⁴ Marcy Magiera, "Grocers save aisle seat for videos," *Advertising Age*, 10 May 1993, 13.

⁵²⁵ Eileen Fitzpatrick, "Vid Stores Hedge 1st-Quarter Buying," *Billboard*, 25 February 1995, 10.

tapes, the majority of which were Hollywood movies.⁵²⁶ In 1988, the CEO of Blockbuster, Wayne Huizenga, described the concept as “a new, fresh, family-style video store”.⁵²⁷ This strategy contrasted with the approach taken in many smaller chains and independent stores during the 1980s. According to Joshua M. Greenberg, most video stores in the 1980s were zoned in order to accommodate various audience groups. Typically, the majority of a store would cater for teenagers and adults, with children’s videos placed in a dedicated space and pornographic content at the opposite end of the store or in a backroom.⁵²⁸ As Greenberg observes, Blockbuster’s slogan, “Wow! What a difference!” was “a deliberately cheery jab at the image of the independent video store with its limited selection and morally ambiguous backroom.”⁵²⁹ Wal-Mart’s business model focused on providing customers access to an extensive range of goods, with a typical store selling 75,000 different items, at “everyday low prices.”⁵³⁰ Like Blockbuster, Wal-Mart and K-Mart modeled themselves as “family” retailers. Wal-Mart, Nicholas Copeland and Christine Labuski argue, “presents itself as a proud embodiment of American patriotism, democracy, Christian family values, consumer choice and freemarket principles.”⁵³¹ Wal-Mart shoppers often share these beliefs, tend to be cultural conservatives and supporters of the Republican Party.⁵³² In its commercial strategies Wal-Mart managed to advance their aggressive consumerist agenda with a visible display of the business’ family values. Stores often contained “a McDonald’s, video arcade, or kids’ viewing centre, which contribute to the overall carnivalesque atmosphere, one suitable for family excursion.”⁵³³ As part of Wal-Mart’s agenda of “retailtainment” stores also offered organized contests and events for children, teenagers, parents and seniors, often sponsored by corporations such as McDonalds and NASCAR.⁵³⁴

⁵²⁶ Daniel F. Cuff, “Head of Video Chain Expects Consolidation,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1988, D4.

⁵²⁷ Cuff, “Head of Video Chain Expects Consolidation,” D4.

⁵²⁸ Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, 95.

⁵²⁹ Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, 128.

⁵³⁰ Barney Warf and Thomas Chapman, “Cathedrals of Consumption: A Political Phenomenology of Wal-Mart,” in *Wal-Mart World: The World’s Biggest Corporation in the Global Economy* ed. Stanley D. Brunn (New York: Routledge, 2006), 171.

⁵³¹ Nicholas Copeland and Christine Labuski, *The World of Wal-Mart: Discounting the American Dream* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3.

⁵³² Shelley, Adrienne M. Proffer and Lisa DeChano, “Wal-Mart and Partisan Politics: From Agricultural Volatility to Red-State Culture,” in *Wal-Mart World: The World’s Biggest Corporation in the Global Economy*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn (New York: Routledge, 2006), 211.

⁵³³ Barney Warf and Thomas Chapman, “Cathedrals of Consumption,” 169.

⁵³⁴ Barney Warf and Thomas Chapman, “Cathedrals of Consumption,” 169–176.

Blockbuster, Wal-Mart and KMart conspicuously selected their product lines in order to attract this notional “family” audience and to offend as few people as possible. From the outset, Blockbuster placed considerable emphasis on its “family-friendly” policies concerning its product offerings. The corporation refused to stock X-rated movies or pornography and, in January 1991, confirmed that its stores would not supply any videos with the NC-17 rating.⁵³⁵ In 1988 Blockbuster instituted its trademarked “Youth Restricted Viewing” programme, which required store clerks to demand ID for R-rated movies and enabled parents to block their children from renting movies in certain categories. A senior Blockbuster executive described this system as “a self-policing situation” as opposed to the corporation “being legislated into doing something.”⁵³⁶ In order to sustain its “family” image Wal-Mart, note Barney Warf and Thomas Chapman, was “notoriously vigilant about ‘protecting’ consumers from products the management deems offensive, a strategy in keeping with the conservative campaign to ‘protect family values’ in the United States.”⁵³⁷ In 1992, both Wal-Mart and K-Mart decided to follow Blockbuster’s example and announced that they would not stock NC-17 videos. In the case of home video, the corporation’s commitment to “family values” seemed to trump its emphasis on “consumer choice”.

The retail strategies devised for the *Home Alone* video demonstrated how 20th Century Fox reacted to the growing importance of supermarkets and nationwide rental chains like Blockbuster and the diminishing influence of smaller, independent retailers. To encourage stores to buy in bulk, and in an attempt to regulate how the product was sold, FoxVideo offered retailers a “pre pack floor display”. The stands contained forty-eight tapes, featured the movie’s branding and included free posters for consumers.⁵³⁸ In order to prevent premature sales and to create a “buzz” around the release, FoxVideo set a national “street date” of August 20th and “affixed large warning stickers” to the boxes used to ship the title.⁵³⁹ However, *Billboard* suggested that some “supermarkets and drugstore chains” had ignored Fox’s instructions and released the video early in order to gain an advantage over

⁵³⁵ David J. Fox, “Blockbuster Video Rates NC-17 Films Unsuitable for All,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 January 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-01-14/entertainment/ca-198_1_blockbuster-video.

⁵³⁶ Gerry Yandel (Cox News Service), “Video Rental Chain Rates Films to Help Parents,” *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star* (Virginia), TV-3.

⁵³⁷ Barney Warf and Thomas Chapman, “Cathedrals of Consumption,” 176.

⁵³⁸ Paul Sweeting, “*Home Alone* Is August ‘Swell-Thru,’” *Billboard*, 18 May 1991, 85.

⁵³⁹ Jim McCullaugh and Paul Verna, “FoxVideo’s *Home* Delivery Just in Time, Say Retailers,” *Billboard*, 7 September 1991, 70.

their competitors.⁵⁴⁰ Blockbuster also used their substantial resources to undercut competitors on price. The chain ordered large quantities of the *Home Alone* video and charged \$17.95 per copy. If consumers took advantage of the Pepsi rebate, they could effectively purchase the movie for the extremely low price of \$12.95.⁵⁴¹ Admittedly, smaller outlets had some opportunity to profit from the video because the low list price allowed them to acquire a large quantity of “low-priced rental inventory”, offering smaller outlets an opportunity to profit from the release.⁵⁴²

“Necessarily elements for the film”: Toy tie-ins and *Home Alone 2*

A range of licensed products were created to capitalize on the brands that John Hughes created. *Home Alone 2*, in particular, was heavily merchandised. The expansion of the licensed products market was clearly aided by various transformations that occurred during the toy market during the 1980s. By the 1990s, selling toys had become a year round business, largely due to the business strategy of the superstore chain Toys R Us, which was the leading toy retailer in the U.S. The corporation underwent rapid expansion during the late 1980s, putting many smaller stores out of business, and started to exert considerable influence over toy manufacturers.⁵⁴³ During the 1990s, supermarket chains, such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart and Target, started to increase their toy sections. These companies used their buying power to secure wholesale discounts and, in the case of Wal-Mart, began to develop their own-brand toys. Wal-Mart even used toys as “loss leaders” and positioned them strategically within stores.⁵⁴⁴ Such was the success of these business strategies that Wal-Mart overtook Toys R Us to become the leading toy retailer in the United States during 1998, with Target in third place and K-Mart joint fourth.⁵⁴⁵ Much like the home video market, toys associated with major studio family films were popular choices with these retailers because a demand had been created before the product arrived in stores.

⁵⁴⁰ Jim McCullaugh and Paul Verna, “FoxVideo’s *Home Delivery* Just in Time,” 70.

⁵⁴¹ Jim McCullaugh and Paul Verna, “FoxVideo’s *Home Delivery* Just in Time,” 70.

⁵⁴² Jim McCullaugh and Paul Verna, “FoxVideo’s *Home Delivery* Just in Time,” 70.

⁵⁴³ Robert Spector, *Category Killers: The Retail Revolution and Its Impact on Consumer Culture* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2005) 27–28.

⁵⁴⁴ Spector, *Category Killers*, 56–57.

⁵⁴⁵ Spector, *Category Killers*, 183.

The mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s concentrated power in toy manufacturing amongst a few large corporations.⁵⁴⁶ The rise of manufacturing in China, following the opening up of the country's economy during the late 1980s, meant that toys could be produced cheaply and in large quantities outside of the United States. The percentage of toy imports to the U.S. from China rose from 6% in 1985 to over 44% in 1990.⁵⁴⁷ As well as reaping the advantages of cheap foreign labour, the toy companies also started to target children more aggressively and, in some respects, creatively than they had in the past. Following the Reagan Administration's deregulation of children's television, partnerships between toy and media companies became increasingly common, leading to entire shows based upon a particular line of toys, such as *Transformers* (1984-1987), *My Little Pony* (1984-1987), *The Care Bears* (1985-1988), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1987-1996), and *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* (1993-1995). A number of feature animations also came out of these partnerships, including *The Care Bears Movie* (1985), *Transformers: The Movie* (1986), *My Little Pony: The Movie* (1986). Collaborations between toy manufacturers and major studios were less common, however. 1989's *The Wizard* was perhaps the most blatant attempt to integrate plugs for toys into a live-action movie's narrative during the late 1980s. The Universal-distributed movie features numerous references to Nintendo products, which led many critics to dismiss the film as "a feature-length commercial."⁵⁴⁸

The development of the Talkboy cassette recorder for *Home Alone 2* was a remarkably successful collaboration between a major Hollywood studio and a toy manufacturer. John Hughes and executives from 20th Century Fox also "worked very closely" with Illinois-based company Tiger Electronics to develop several toys that could be integrated into the narrative of *Home Alone 2*.⁵⁴⁹ The decision to develop the toys alongside *Home Alone 2*'s development was an innovative step, which meant that the filmmakers did not have to radically alter the film's narrative in order to include clumsy references to toys. The deal also helped Tiger to create a product line that could effectively capitalize on association with the movie. The *Los Angeles Times* suggested that, through its integration of product

⁵⁴⁶ Ellen Seiter, *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 195.

⁵⁴⁷ Bill Brown, "How To Do Things with Things (A Toy Story)," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1998), 963.

⁵⁴⁸ Dave Kehr, "The Wizard: A Transparent Commercial," *Chicago Tribune*, 15 December 1989, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-12-15/entertainment/8903180211_1_wizard-nintendo-rain-man.

⁵⁴⁹ Gerard Evans, "In the court of King Culkin," *Daily Mail*, 4 December 1992, 50.

placement and merchandising strategies, “*Home Alone 2 May Redefine Merchandising*.”⁵⁵⁰ However, the close relationship between the Hollywood studio and the toy manufacturer generated a significant level of debate in the American press. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported, the studio faced considerable criticism from parents:

At issue is how far some companies will go to cash in on their movies – even if it means enticing 6-year-olds to covet costly toys by putting the eye-catching devices in the hands of film heroes. Some critics view it as product placement at its ugliest.⁵⁵¹

For example, Jeff Chester, the co-director of Center for Media Education, a Washington-based consumer group, remarked, “With Christmas just around the corner, this is a very, very slick and cynical move on the part of the filmmaker.”⁵⁵² However, studios argue that to curtail product placement in Hollywood films would be an infringement of the First Amendment.⁵⁵³ In response to the negative publicity surrounding product placement in *Home Alone 2*, Al Ovadia, 20th Century Fox’s licensing and merchandising president, asserted that the toys were a fundamental part of the filmmakers’ vision. He maintained, “We didn’t put them in the movie to sell toys. We put them in the movie because they were necessary elements for the film.”⁵⁵⁴ The controversy surrounding *Home Alone 2*’s promotion of the Talkboy cassette recorder demonstrated how overt attempts to market products to children through movies could prompt considerable criticism of the film industry and filmmakers.

In spite of the debate that accompanied its release, the Talkboy became a bestselling toy. An early version of the Talkboy sold moderately well following the *Home Alone 2*’s cinematic release. This success led to the development of Talkboy Deluxe, which was closer in appearance and functionality to the prop in the movie. Tiger Electronics and 20th Century Fox timed the release of the Talkboy Deluxe to coincide with the video release of

⁵⁵⁰ Horovitz, “New Twist in Tie-Ins.”

⁵⁵¹ Bruce Horovitz, “New Twist in Tie-Ins: *Home Alone 2* May Redefine Merchandising,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 November 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-11-12/business/fi-433_1_merchandising-empire.

⁵⁵² Horovitz, “New Twist in Tie-Ins.”

⁵⁵³ In a review of case law, Paul Siegel argues that regulation of product placement is highly unlikely because the courts have recognised cinema as “artistic speech” since the 1950s. Paul Siegel, “Product Placement and the Law”, in *Handbook of Product Placement in the Mass Media: New Strategies in Marketing Theory, Practice, Trends and Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2010), ed. Mary-Lous Galician, 89–99.

⁵⁵⁴ Horovitz, “New Twist in Tie-Ins.”

Home Alone 2, in order to facilitate cross-promotion. Tiger Electronics “tagged” the video’s release in their television commercials, and images and logos from the movie featured prominently on the packaging for the toy.⁵⁵⁵ FoxVideo included a leaflet for Tiger’s *Home Alone* product range inside the packaging for the cassette.⁵⁵⁶ In spite of *Home Alone 2*’s success at the box office and in the home video market, retailers failed to anticipate the popularity of the Talkboy Deluxe and, prior to Christmas 1993, demand for the toy significantly outstripped supply. It appears that the major retailers’ reluctance to stockpile merchandise and their computerised “just-in-time” ordering systems, which did not allow a quick response to the increased demand, fuelled the toy shortage.⁵⁵⁷ Such was the level of demand that Tiger Electronics was forced to increase production in Hong Kong and stopped broadcasting commercials, following orders for “a couple of million” units.⁵⁵⁸ The only stores that continued to receive deliveries in the lead up to Christmas were major chains Toys ‘R’ Us, Wal-Mart and K-Mart.⁵⁵⁹ Due to their immense buying power, these corporations exerted considerable influence over toy manufacturers, which meant that they received priority status when placing reorders for popular merchandise. The major corporations therefore became the biggest beneficiaries of the Deluxe Talkboy’s success. To the apparent surprise of retailers, demand for the toy continued for several years after the movie’s theatrical release. The Deluxe Talkboy was a popular purchase for Christmas 1994, with *USA Today* noting that, “the huge second year demand for Tiger’s voice-altering Talkboy has caught many off guard,” and again in Christmas 1995.⁵⁶⁰

The popularity of the Talkboy Deluxe cannot be merely attributed to advertising push that accompanied its release, although this was undoubtedly a factor in its success. Consistent with longstanding strategies for selling tie-in toys, Tiger’s promotional materials suggested

⁵⁵⁵ Paula Parisi, “*Home 2* gets \$16 mil push from FoxVideo,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16 April 1993. LexisNexis Academic.

⁵⁵⁶ Video Week, “Foxvideo Lines Up 4 *Home Alone 2* Tie-Ins,” *Video Week*, 19 April 1993, 2.

⁵⁵⁷ Kristin Downey Grimsley, “Who’s Got Some Presents of Mind?: Retailers Find Themselves Plumb Out of This Year’s Hottest Christmas Gifts,” *Washington Post*, 21 December 1993, D1.; Mark Albright, “For toy stores, ‘just in time’ deliveries not soon enough,” *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida), 23 December 1993, 1E.

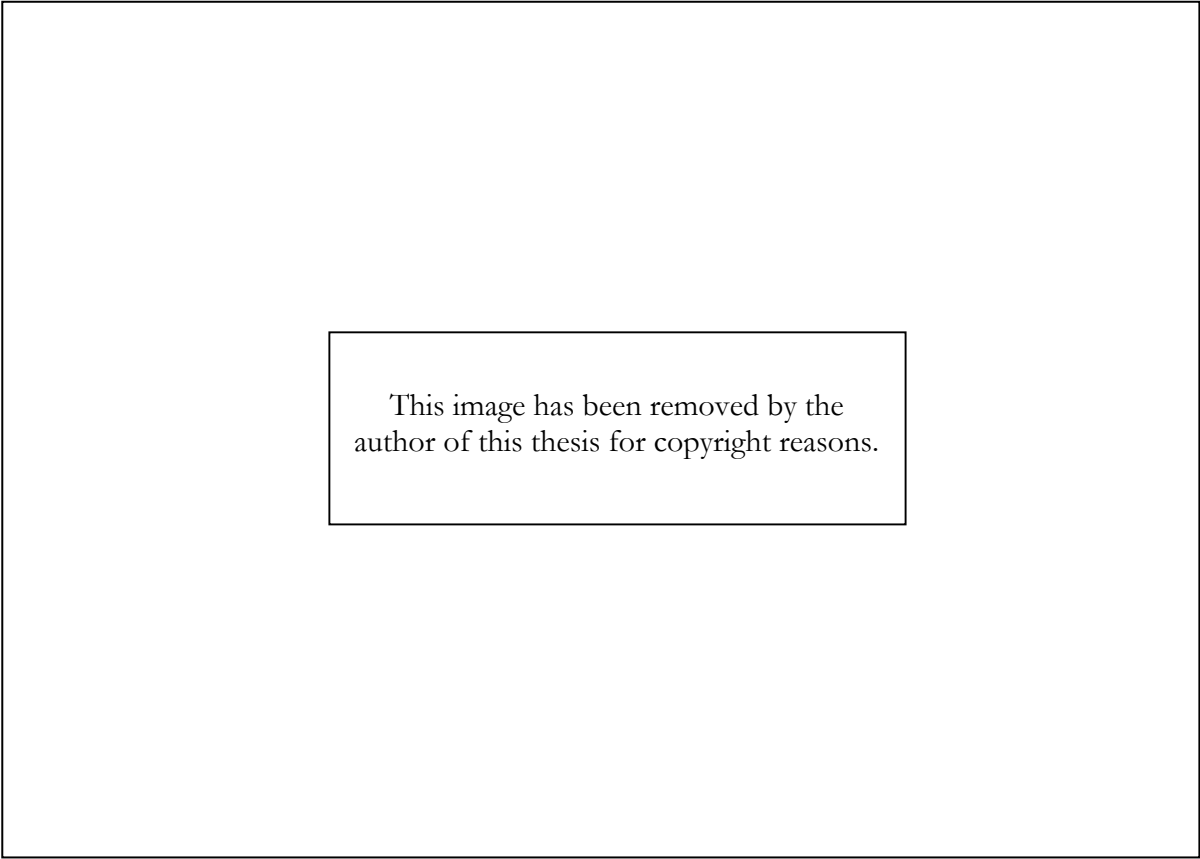
⁵⁵⁸ Babette Morgan, “The Talk of Toyland: A Shortage of Talkboys has Santas Scrambling,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 December 1993, 1F.

⁵⁵⁹ Morgan, “The Talk of Toyland,” 1F.

⁵⁶⁰ Michelle Healy, “Shelves are bare of these hot toys,” *USA Today*, 9 December 1994, 1D; “Tiger’s Got ‘94’s Hottest Toys Galore,” *PR Newswire* (Vernon Hills, Illinois), 16 November 1994. LexisNexis Academic; Carolyn Susman, “Relax Mom: You Can Find That Hot Toy,” *Palm Beach Post*, 29 November 1995, 1D.

that their products could help children to extend the fun of the movie. For example, one leaflet (shown in Image 47) proclaimed, “Create your very own Home Alone 2 adventure with these new toys from Tiger!, as well as pointing out that the product range included “working replicas of the actual toys Kevin uses in the movie”. The Talkboy’s box featured a photograph of Kevin McAllister (Macaulay Culkin) using the toy and included a cassette tape “with real voices from *Home Alone 2*.” Through evocation of the film’s narrative and association with Kevin McCallister/Macaulay Culkin, the Talkboy’s packaging suggested to children that, as Gary Cross observes in relation to early products, they could gain “entry into a special community of the initiated and of fantasy as embodied in the celebrity image.”⁵⁶¹ Although the creators of the Talkboy Deluxe clearly targeted children, its \$34.95 price tag meant that most parents had to see some value in the purchase beyond merely satisfying their children’s desires. As a portable cassette recorder with integrated speaker, the Talkboy Deluxe also had practical features that helped to justify the cost of the product to parents.

⁵⁶¹ Cross, *Kids’ Stuff*, 109.



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 47 – Leaflet for *Home Alone 2* Toys, Tiger Toys, 1992.

By the beginning of the 1990s, Hollywood executives were showing greater interest in video games tie-ins for major movies and video game manufacturers expressed a renewed desire to collaborate with Hollywood.⁵⁶² By the early 1990s, the increasingly stable and lucrative video games industry's focus on the family market clearly corresponded the major Hollywood studios' business strategy. At the start of the decade the most popular console in the United States was the Nintendo Entertainment System. Nintendo devised the NES as a family-oriented product, initially branding the console as the Famicom (Family Computer) in Japan. The company also controlled game content through legal contracts and computer chip barriers, and so could ensure that their products were suitable for a wide audience. As Neil Narine and Sara M. Grimes note, "Nintendo was able to enforce family-friendly content restrictions on game developers and temporarily reframed videogames as a *children's* (not a teen's) medium."⁵⁶³ Advertisements and packaging for the console in the United States emphasized the NES's family-friendly credentials. The back of the box of the NES Action Set console bundle, for example, featured a large image (shown in Image 48) of a white, middle-class nuclear family huddled around the console. The wording on the packaging, which includes the word "family" in every sentence further reinforces the association of Nintendo with family entertainment. However, the family-friendly status of video games started to waver in the early 1990s. Following the release of games such as *Mortal Kombat* (1992), *Wolfenstein 3D* (1992) and *Doom* (1993), panics in the media over the content of video games intensified. A series of high-profile congressional hearings on violence in videogames generated further negative publicity for the video games industry and led to the creation of the Electronic Software Ratings Board. The new ratings introduced by the ESRB, observe Neil Narine and Sara M. Grimes, "promised to put parents back "in charge" of their children's leisure."⁵⁶⁴ A number of retailers, including Toys R Us and specialized game stores Babbage's, Electronics Boutique and FuncoLand, pledged to prevent sales of M ("Mature") Rated games to underage consumers.⁵⁶⁵ Blockbuster video also incorporated the ESRB's ratings system into their Youth Restricted Viewing scheme, treating M rated games in the same way as R rated movies. Given this

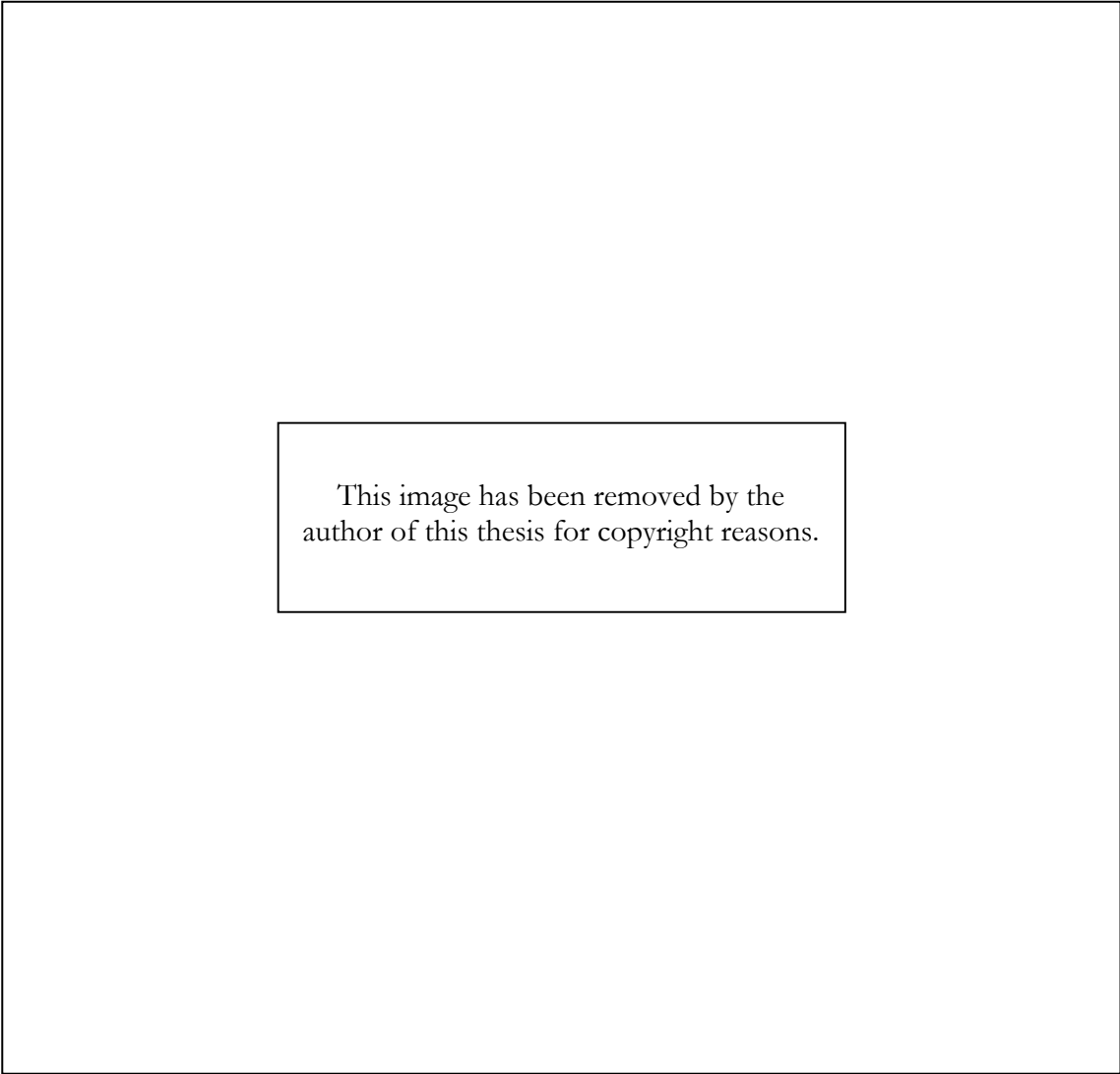
⁵⁶² Geoffrey Deitz, "Studios play along with video games'," *Variety*, 18 November 1991, 1.

⁵⁶³ Neil Narine and Sara M. Grimes, "The Turbulent Rise of the 'Child Gamer': Public Fears and Corporate Promises in Cinematic and Promotional Depictions of Children's Digital Play," *Communications, Culture & Critique*, 2 (2009), 327.

⁵⁶⁴ Neil Narine and Sara M. Grimes, "The Turbulent Rise of the 'Child Gamer'," 329.

⁵⁶⁵ Federal Trade Commission, *Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children*, September 2000, 104. Surprisingly, Walmart and K-Mart did not introduce policies restricting the sale of M rated games until 2000, although the retailers stocked few M rated titles anyway.

context, tie-ins with Hollywood family films helped to reinforce that video games were still suitable entertainment for the whole family.



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 48 – Nintendo Entertainment System “Action Set”, Box.

During the 1980s, tie-ins between movies and video games had been relatively rare. A range of problems had limited the growth of this market and contributed to Hollywood's lack of interest in developing video game tie-ins. In particular, the video game crash of 1983-1984 drew attention to the industry's instability. Moreover, the high profile failure of Atari's *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial Game* demonstrated that, while other film-related merchandise could be produced relatively quickly and simply, video games required substantial investment of time and money. Developed in just five weeks, rather than the standard development phase of five to six months, the inferior *ET* game sold fewer than 1.5 million copies out of roughly 4 million.⁵⁶⁶ At the start of the 1990s, the development and production process for a decent quality cartridge game often took longer than the film's production.⁵⁶⁷ However, given that the video games industry was valued at \$3.4 billion in 1989, the studios were undoubtedly conscious of the economic incentives for collaborating with games companies. By selling licenses for video games studios could generate additional revenues while taking relatively few financial risks. Typically licensees paid royalties of between 35 cents and \$1.25 per unit sold.⁵⁶⁸ Although it was difficult to develop a game in time for a film's theatrical release, studios and games manufacturers were often able to coordinate the game's appearance in stores with the movie's video release, generating publicity for both. For instance, advertisements for the *Dennis the Menace* game publicised a \$5 rebate with the purchase of both the game and the video cassette.⁵⁶⁹ There were benefits for the games developer as well. By basing games on pre-sold properties, video games companies could potentially benefit from the publicity generated by the films and, although they were taking a larger financial risk than the studio, they retained the majority of profits.

Not surprisingly, as major family entertainment brands, John Hughes' movies were involved in Hollywood's attempts to develop tie-ins between films and video games. Several different game developers purchased licenses from 20th Century Fox for the *Home Alone* video game, following the movie's box office success. Between them Bethesda Softworks, Sega and Imagineering Inc. produced games for the Nintendo Entertainment System, Nintendo Gameboy, Super Nintendo, Sega Master System, Sega Mega Drive (aka

⁵⁶⁶ Raiford Guins, "Concrete and Clay: The Life and Afterlife of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* for the Atari 2600," *Design and Culture* 1, no. 3 (2009), 351, 346.

⁵⁶⁷ Geoffrey Deitz, "Studios play along with video games'," *Variety*, 18 November 1991, 1.

⁵⁶⁸ Hillier, *The New Hollywood*, 32.

⁵⁶⁹ Advertisement for Dennis the Menace Game, *Disney Adventures*, December 1993.

Sega Genesis), and Commodore Amiga. As a consequence, during late 1991 and throughout 1992 various games with *Home Alone* branding appeared on the market, all of which featured different scenarios based on the film and distinctive styles of gameplay. Fox repeated the strategy when issuing licenses for *Home Alone 2*, granting permission for various Nintendo, Sega and PC games. As the movie was the sequel to a major hit, developers secured licensing deals during the movie's production phase and Nintendo developed their versions of the video game to coincide with the movie's theatrical release. Whereas 20th Century Fox seemed content to issue licenses and leave the developers to devise the *Home Alone* games, Warners and Hughes appear to have had more input into the content of the *Dennis the Menace* game. According to *Boxoffice*, Warner Bros contracted Ocean Software to develop a *Dennis the Menace* video game for the Super Nintendo, Nintendo Game Boy and the Commodore Amiga.⁵⁷⁰ All versions of the game featured similar scenarios and gameplay, which referenced a range of settings and scenes from the film. This suggests that the studio, or possibly Hughes, had been involved in the games development and had ensured that there was consistency between products. Much like the Talkboy, the *Dennis the Menace* game was conceived as a way to extend enjoyment of the film's narrative. Evidently, the games also fulfilled a promotional function, by featuring logos and images from the film's publicity materials. The Hughes Entertainment brand figures prominently on the packaging for the games based on Hughes' films. The company's logo appears on the cases of later releases of the *Home Alone* game, all versions of the *Home Alone 2* game, and on the *Dennis the Menace* game, which also includes the caption "Based on a motion picture screenplay written by John Hughes and directed by Nick Castle." Not only did these games extend the brands of individual films, but they also sought to associate the Hughes Entertainment brand with video games.

The fate of the video game of *Baby's Day Out* demonstrates how video game tie-ins were by no means a guaranteed source of profit for the studios or manufacturers. 20th Century Fox sold licenses for *Baby's Day Out* to Hi Tech Entertainment, who intended to produce games for the Super Nintendo, Gameboy and Sega Genesis consoles. Emphasising its family-friendly credentials, Hi Tech described itself as "a leading worldwide publisher of high quality, interactive software for the entire family".⁵⁷¹ In fact, the company focused on creating games that used licensed characters or properties. These games were often poorly

⁵⁷⁰ "Promo Guide: Warner Bros," *Boxoffice*, April 1993, 16.

⁵⁷¹ "Hi Tech Expressions to Change Name," *Business Wire*, 6 June 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

developed and clearly relied heavily on association with popular brands in order to generate sales. However, for reasons that are not entirely clear, the *Baby's Day Out* video game never went on sale. Hi Tech seemed poised to put the game on sale during the film's theatrical run, but then delayed until the video release.⁵⁷² *Entertainment Weekly* even reviewed the game, which suggests that it was ready for release, but described it as "unsettling."⁵⁷³ It seems probable that the poor quality of the *Baby's Day Out* game and the film's weak box office performance factored into the decision not to release the video game. Evidently, licensed games were highly susceptible to problems caused by box office failures.

Conclusions

Robert C. Allen posits that "the reorientation of the movie industry toward both its audience and its markets in the last half of the 1980s" led to "the creation of a new movie type, the family film."⁵⁷⁴ Building on Allen's work on the 1990s family film, I have explored several examples of how John Hughes and his movies were implicated in this particular production trend. John Hughes capitalized on the specific convergence of economic and cultural factors that supported the growth of family entertainment during the early 1990s. In much the same way that he had done with the teen film in the mid-1980s, Hughes showed a high level of commercial awareness and worked diligently to make the most of opportunities created by ancillary markets. Through the extraordinary box office success of *Home Alone*, Hughes secured his position as one of the most powerful filmmakers in Hollywood. During the early 1990s, he obtained extremely lucrative multi-picture contracts with 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros. These studios were clearly willing to defer to Hughes' apparently exceptional understanding of how to create movies that would appeal to the family audience. They gave him considerable control over his productions and allowed him to shoot in his home city of Chicago, often at considerable expense. Warner Bros' decision to position Hughes at the centre of their efforts to create a Family Entertainment banner acted as confirmation of the quality associated with Hughes' brand, in addition to signalling the studio's belief in the economic value of family films. Their

⁵⁷² "Video Notes," *Video Week*, 11 July 1994, 6; "Video Notes," *Video Week*, 3 October 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

⁵⁷³ Jonathan Carter and Chip Carter "Kids Extra Video Games Reviews," *Entertainment Weekly*, 21 October 1994, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,304115,00.html>.

⁵⁷⁴ Allen, "Home Alone Together," 110.

partnership also suggested the importance of “values” when publicizing family-oriented products.

Drawing on a range of primary materials, I have shown that Hughes’ films and the family film more generally were positioned in the marketplace and explored some of the reasons for these commercial strategies. Although ancillary markets accounted for the majority of studio revenues during this period, it is important to note that theatrical releases remained important and their management still formed a central part of the studios’ function as distributors. Moreover, although the exhibition sector in the United States struggled somewhat after at the start of the decade, due to the recession, the practice of watching films at the cinema was part of the wider culture of family films. Hughes family films fit neatly with exhibitors’ agendas during the early 1990s, as cinemas placed particular emphasis on family audiences. The involvement of Hughes’ films in various promotional gimmicks reflects a concerted attempt by studios and theatre owners to encourage attendance by a cross-generational audience. Although, it is worth noting that neither of the strategies associated with *Beethoven* nor *Miracle on 34th Street* could be described as a success. Overall, with the exception of the first two *Home Alone* films, during the early 1990s Hughes’ family films were not major box office hits in the United States. But their popularity in overseas markets and in other formats reinforced Hollywood’s belief in the commercial viability of family-oriented products.

Ancillary markets formed a central part of the business logics that motivated trend towards family-oriented movies during the early 1990s. As they had in the 1980s, Hughes’ movies proved to be popular on home video. The home video market was clearly shaped by the agendas of the major studios and the large retail chains, which dominated the distribution and retail of tapes respectively. As my discussion of Warner Family Entertainment shows, branding products as family friendly reinforced the perception that the studios were catering for this audience and also allowed them to rerelease older films as “classic” titles on video. The Hollywood family film was evidently a good match for the “values” of retailers such as Blockbuster and Wal-Mart, who built their public images around broader notions of family and entertainment. The licensed products market was also a significant influence on the family film production trend. The strategy of integrating toys into a narrative was by no means a new strategy but the Talkboy cassette player was an unusual example of a very high profile and close partnership between a major Hollywood studio

and a toy company. Although the placement of the Talkboy generated controversy in the mainstream press, it remained a popular toy for several years. Tiger's marketing of the product offered children with the opportunity to repeat and extend the pleasures associated with *Home Alone 2*. As Carolyn Jess-Cook observes:

From video tie-ins to McHappy Meal toys, the new horizontally integrated Hollywood continues to create ways of engaging the spectator within a network of remembering and re-enacting scenarios that are designed to recycle and film's narrative and repeat the spectatorial experience as far as possible.⁵⁷⁵

Video games also formed part of this attempt to generate additional revenues by extending the "experience" of particular texts. The number of video games based upon entertainment licenses grew significantly during this period and served to reinforce the economic and ideological agendas of both the film and electronic entertainment industries. During the early 1990s, video games companies, such as Nintendo, were looking to affirm the family-friendly nature of their products. The purchase of licenses based on Hollywood family films was an expedient way to for games manufacturer to publically demonstrate their commitment to family entertainment.

As I have discussed, a range of ideological and business logics underpinned corporations' attempts to court families during the 1990s. It is important to note that the strategies that many companies deployed were far from value neutral. As Raiford Guins argues:

Family is central to strategies of control in its support and expression of the mechanisms of power throughout culture... We see it enacted and enabled when Blockbuster Inc. and Wal-Mart, major retailers of media, designate their space, commodities and services as "family friendly", places to find heavily policed "family values."⁵⁷⁶

In many ways, the development of family entertainment was symptomatic of the awkward coalition of free market capitalists and conservative Christians during the Reagan-Bush era. Bethany Moreton, for example, argues that the global success of the Wal-Mart brand demonstrates that "family values are an indispensable element of the global service

⁵⁷⁵ Carolyn Jess-Cook, *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1.

⁵⁷⁶ Raiford Guins, *Edited Clean Version: Technology and the Culture of Control* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press), 11.

economy, not a distraction from it.”⁵⁷⁷ As I will demonstrate in Chapter Six, the values of American capitalism and family associated with family entertainment’s economic and cultural circulation informed the content of Hughes’ movies.

⁵⁷⁷ Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.

Chapter Four

Movies About “Ordinary Kids”: Teen Romance, Genre and Narrative

From the start, critics recognised that John Hughes’ teen films departed significantly from conventional approaches to the genre – and especially from dominant tendencies within youth movies of the 1980s. In a 1984 article, for example, Roger Ebert proclaimed, “All of a sudden, there are movies about teenagers who are ordinary kids.”⁵⁷⁸ Both *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club*, he suggested, are about “fairly typical American teenagers... kids who are vulnerable and serious and spend infinitely more time speculating about sex than actually experiencing it.”⁵⁷⁹ Ebert’s perspective was shared by many other critics. *Variety*’s reviewer noted that *Sixteen Candles* “veers from the contempo youth genre film”.⁵⁸⁰ The *New York Times*’ Janet Maslin felt that the film was “a cuter and better-natured teen comedy than most” and Pauline Kael, in her *New Yorker* review, described it as “less raucous in tone than most of the recent teen pictures”.⁵⁸¹ When *The Breakfast Club* was released eight months later, critics noted that the film strayed even further from familiar teen film territory. The *Chicago Tribune*’s Gene Siskel noted with surprise, “What’s this? A teenage movie with no sex, no dope, no hot rods?”⁵⁸² Another newspaper reviewer observed that, in *The Breakfast Club*, “there nothing of the stuff that we’ve come to expect from the standard teen romp: no nudity, no violence, no sex-crazed killers, no wild booze parties.”⁵⁸³ These kinds of comments suggested that, in critics’ opinions at least, Hughes had successfully launched a distinctive product, which seemed to herald the arrival of a new kind of teen film.

⁵⁷⁸ Roger Ebert, “John Hughes: When You’re 16, You’re More Serious Than You’ll Ever Be Again,” *Chicago Sun Times*, 29 April 1984, <http://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/john-hughes-when-youre-16-youre-more-serious-than-youll-ever-be-again>.

⁵⁷⁹ Ebert, “John Hughes: When You’re 16.”

⁵⁸⁰ “*Sixteen Candles*,” *Variety*, 2 May 1984, 16.

⁵⁸¹ Janet Maslin, “16 Candles: A Teenage Comedy,” *New York Times*, 4 May 1984, C14 ; Pauline Kael, “*Sixteen Candles*,” *The New Yorker*, 28 May 1984, reprinted in Pauline Kael, *State of the Art: Film Writings 1983-1985*, 173.

⁵⁸² Gene Siskel, “John Hughes Wakes Up to the Needs of Teens with *Breakfast Club*,” *Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1985, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-02-17/entertainment/8501090893_1_sixteen-candles-writer-director-john-hughes-film.

⁵⁸³ Skip Sheffield, “*Breakfast Club* best film yet on teens,” *Boca Raton News* [FL], 19 February 1985, 1B.

Various newspaper articles and reviews argued that Hughes' films were distinct from the sex comedies and slasher movies that constituted the majority of the U.S. film industry's teenage-oriented releases during the early 1980s. Specifically, journalists claimed that the representations in Hughes' films were more realistic and sympathetic to the concerns of teenagers. In Roger Ebert's view, for example, the characters of Hughes' teen films were significantly different from the "killers, victims, lust-crazed sex fiends, hookers, punks, sluts and goons" that populated most teen films.⁵⁸⁴ In his review of *The Breakfast Club*, Ebert argued that *Sixteen Candles* and *The Breakfast Club* made "an honest attempt to create teenagers who might seem plausible to other teenagers".⁵⁸⁵ The fact that Hughes' young cast members were in their teens and early-twenties, and were therefore part of the target audience for these films, helped to legitimize these kinds of claims. Anthony Michael Hall, one of Hughes' teenage stars, argued that, with their emphasis on "real kids", Hughes' films were superior to the "exploitation trash we've been seeing so much."⁵⁸⁶ Seeking to assert the distinctiveness of *The Breakfast Club*, Judd Nelson decried the fact that many films "treat teenagers as if they're animals" and Emilio Estevez dismissed "Sex. Drugs. Rock 'n' Roll" teen films as "exploitative trash."⁵⁸⁷

As Thomas Doherty notes, teenagers are "a diversified group with a multitude of (sometimes contradictory) tastes and values" and it is therefore in the film industry's interest to produce a variety of movies for adolescents.⁵⁸⁸ Many commentators argued, however, that the studios had been producing films for a relatively narrow audience in the early 1980s. Of course, the sex comedies and slasher movies of the early 1980s attracted sizeable audiences, including girls and women. Although Richard Nowell builds a compelling argument that producers developed slasher movies with girls in mind, the presence of female-oriented production strategies and the movies' commercial success do

⁵⁸⁴ Ebert, "John Hughes: When You're Sixteen."

⁵⁸⁵ Roger Ebert, "The Breakfast Club," *Chicago Sun Times*, 15 February 1985, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-breakfast-club-1985>

⁵⁸⁶ Rick Lyman, "Anthony Michael Hall as Geek: 'You gotta learn to like him,'" *Chicago Tribune*, 10 June 1984.

⁵⁸⁷ Jeff Silverman, "5 for *Breakfast*: Young *Club* Stars Get Serious About Teens on Screen," *Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1985, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-02-17/entertainment/8501090892_1_emilio-estevez-laughing-round-table

⁵⁸⁸ Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 200.

not necessarily equate with audience approval.⁵⁸⁹ Moreover, As Peter Kramer notes, “audiences can only choose from what is on offer, and may well be dissatisfied with, even offended by, the industry’s output.”⁵⁹⁰ Rightly or wrongly, the dominant perception in the American media was that slasher films and teen sex comedies were male-oriented. In this context, Hughes’ movies seemed to cater more overtly for an audience group that the film industry had largely neglected in recent years, specifically girls and younger teenagers. In a 1984 interview, Anthony Michael Hall argued, “I think teenage girls are especially ready for this kind of movie after being grossed-out by all the sex and violence in most teenage movies.”⁵⁹¹ Clearly, the idea of targeting a different audience to other teen films also had a commercial dimension. *Variety*, for instance, suggested that *Sixteen Candles* may not attract “teen action and sex crowds” but would perhaps appeal to “budding adolescent groups who can indentify with the turbulence about growing up in a nice family”.⁵⁹²

But not all critics approved of Hughes attempts to appeal to a teenage audience, with *The Breakfast Club*’s emphasis on the apparently trivial problems of the teenage protagonists proving especially divisive. Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert celebrated the movie as “one of the films that points the way” toward a less stereotyped representation of teenagers, applauding Hughes for being “prepared to give teenage audiences credit for more intelligence and taste than Hollywood thinks they have.”⁵⁹³ Similarly, Richard Corliss felt that Hughes’ film proved that “there is a life form after teenpix” with “a minimum of genre pandering.”⁵⁹⁴ However, many critics admonished Hughes for, as one review put it, “pandering to a young audience”, on grounds that “the film romanticises their bad behaviour as social protest.”⁵⁹⁵ The implication was that, by aligning itself with its teenage protagonists, *The Breakfast Club* was manipulating young audiences. Pauline Kael asserted, for example, that, “Young audiences have always been suckers for this kind of flattery”.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁸⁹ Richard Nowell, *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Cycle* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

⁵⁹⁰ Peter Kramer, *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 39.

⁵⁹¹ Ebert, “John Hughes: When You’re Sixteen.”

⁵⁹² “*Sixteen Candles*,” *Variety*, 2 May 1984, 16.

⁵⁹³ Siskel, “John Hughes Wakes Up to the Needs of Teens”; Ebert, “John Hughes: When You’re Sixteen.”

⁵⁹⁴ Richard Corliss, “Is There Life After Teenpix?” *Time*, 18 February, 1985, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,960765,00.html>.

⁵⁹⁵ Michael Sragow, ‘Five Easy Pieces: Playing the *Breakfast Club* variations,’ *Boston Phoenix*, 19 February 1985, p. C4

⁵⁹⁶ Pauline Kael, “*The Breakfast Club*,” *Village Voice*, 8 April 1985.

Intriguingly, given its emphasis on cinema's commercial appeal, the most histrionic response to the movie appeared in *Variety*. In his conclusion, the reviewer verges on accusing the teen film genre of precipitating the disintegration of American society. "When the causes of the Decline of Western Civilization are finally writ," he proclaimed, "Hollywood would surely have to answer why it turned one of man's most significant art forms over to the self-gratification of high schoolers."⁵⁹⁷

Academic critics have levelled similar complaints at Hughes' teen films, identifying them as signature examples of the ideological conservatism purported to dominate both Hollywood and US culture in the 1980s. Vicky LeBeau, for example, describes them as part of "a cinema of facile materialistic conservatism", arguing that *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* "takes on the imaginative poverty, the materialism and the reactionary politics of which not only this cinema but its consumers stand accused".⁵⁹⁸ Such claims are consistent with broader anxieties concerning 1980s Hollywood cinema that have coalesced around Andrew Britton's and Robin Wood's influential concept of "Reaganite Entertainment". This perspective on 1980s Hollywood conceptualises the teenage audience as prime consumers of the mindless pleasures of Reaganite Entertainment. Ann De Vaney, for example, suggests that Hughes' films are "particularly pernicious because they are uniquely involving for their teen viewers."⁵⁹⁹ The happy ending is a significant source of concern for these scholars and is presented as especially symptomatic of the attempt to perpetuate conservative ideology. In his diatribe against the commercialism of New Hollywood cinema, Mark Crispin Miller asserts that the "new happy ending" provides a "reassurance" that is simultaneously "authoritarian and easygoing", but is "abrupt, illogical, unmotivated".⁶⁰⁰ Such claims rely on sweeping generalisations about the ideological operations of film texts. While Hollywood storytelling conventions and generic frameworks clearly do shape their representations, textual strategies are by no means monolithic in their operations and their effect. Like any films, or other cultural texts, John Hughes' teen films negotiate ideology in multiple, even contradictory ways rather than offering a straightforward "reflection" of conservative values. The blunt and doctrinaire conception

⁵⁹⁷ "The Breakfast Club," *Variety*, 13 February 1985, 19.

⁵⁹⁸ Vicky LeBeau, "Daddy's Cinema: Femininity and Mass Spectatorship," *Screen* 33, no. 3 (1992), 254, 256.

⁵⁹⁹ Ann De Vaney, "Critical Viewing: The Depiction of Women in John Hughes' Teen Movies," *Feminist Collections* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1987), 5.

⁶⁰⁰ Mark Crispin Miller, "Hollywood: The Ad," in *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Thomas Schatz, (London: Routledge, 2004), 309.

of “Reaganite Entertainment” arguably limits adequate understanding of the ideological operations of these films, and of the diverse ways in which audiences may negotiate them. They merit a more supple and nuanced understanding of ideology, representation and textual process. For example, while affirming the conservatism of “brat pack” films such as *Pretty in Pink* Suzanne Sowinska nonetheless acknowledges that this is by no means a straightforward process, as they “manage to provide viewers with an experience of ‘rebellion’ against family, class boundaries, etc., while actually shoring up and glorifying those things.”⁶⁰¹ Ann DeVaney argues, moreover, that “by giving teen viewers the opportunity to laugh and feel superior... Hughes gives them a sense of power.”⁶⁰²

Scholarly Approaches to the Teen Film

Sixteen Candles and *The Breakfast Club* were the first two films in a cycle of six teen movies that Hughes wrote, directed and/or produced between 1984 and 1987. He followed *The Breakfast Club* with *Weird Science*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*. As was discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 these movies played a central role in the development of the John Hughes brand. The significance of John Hughes’ teen films as cultural texts is closely bound to their status as products of the U.S. film industry during the 1980s. However, the majority of scholarship on the teen film has downplayed the role that the entertainment industry, film critics and audiences play in creating and circulating expectations of the genre. Scholars have frequently adopted the method used by Jon Lewis in his study of “teen films and youth culture”. He argues that genre begins with “the text” rather than “industry intent” or “target audiences”.⁶⁰³ This approach to genre allows scholars to, as Andrew Tudor suggests, “classify films according to a priori criteria depending on critical purpose.”⁶⁰⁴ For example, Lewis’ selections serve to support his contention that “...despite stylistic, tonal, industrial, and by now even generational differences within the genre, teen films all seem to focus on a single social concern: the breakdown of traditional forms of authority.”⁶⁰⁵ This approach collapses differences between films from diverse contexts and therefore offers limited insights into films as products of the U.S. film industry in particular historical periods. Other studies are less

⁶⁰¹ Suzanne Sowinska, “Class Clash in Brat Pack Films,” *Off Our Backs: A Women’s Newjournal* 19, no. 9 (October 1989), 18

⁶⁰² De Vaney, “Critical Viewing,” 5.

⁶⁰³ Jon Lewis, *The Road to Romance and Ruin* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.

⁶⁰⁴ Andrew Tudor, *Theories of Film* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1974), 137.

⁶⁰⁵ Lewis, *The Road to Romance and Ruin*, 3.

explicit concerning their choice of method, apparently relying on the notion that a “common cultural consensus” underpins their choices.⁶⁰⁶ While many text-focused studies have helped to validate the study of youth-oriented films, often on the basis of apparent critical or (sub)cultural “value”, they have provided limited explanation of the operations of the 1980s “teen film” as the product of commercial cinema.

Like many genres, the teen film cannot easily be identified on the basis of its iconography or, necessarily, its themes. As Timothy Shary suggests, the teen film “is defined not so much by its narrative characteristics (although there are considerable generic similarities between the films) as it is by the population that the films are about and to whom they are directed.”⁶⁰⁷ As Steve Neale argues, any approach to genres needs to acknowledge that they cannot adequately be conceived of as discrete assemblages of films but are instead defined via complex and intersecting discursive networks that far exceed the films themselves: “Genres do not consist solely of films,” he observes, “They also consist of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema and which interact with the films themselves during the viewing process.”⁶⁰⁸ Genre might be most accurately described as a process, with definitions of a given genre constantly subject to alteration. As the newspaper reviews of Hughes’ films indicate, audiences had certain perceptions of the teen film informed by their awareness of other texts in the genre. Hughes’ films were in dialogue with previous teen movies and complicit in reworking the genre, or at least expanding the boundaries of audience expectations.

The terms “teenpic”, “teen movie” and “youth film”, while similar, arguably refer to different kinds of texts. Catherine Driscoll observes that not only have scholars used the term “youth film” to describe movies that feature, or appeal to, a wider age range, but also to distance films with a “rebellious subcultural cachet” from the teen film.⁶⁰⁹ The term “teen film” is more typically applied to mainstream movies that are “centred on the institutional life of adolescents at home and at school”.⁶¹⁰ This distinction reflects a critical perspective that tends to privilege texts that are apparently more aesthetically innovative, or that deal with masculine concerns, over films that are overtly commercial and focus on

⁶⁰⁶ Tudor, *Theories of Film*, 138.

⁶⁰⁷ Timothy Shary, “The Teen Film and Its Methods of Study,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 25, 1 (1997), 39.

⁶⁰⁸ Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 31.

⁶⁰⁹ Catherine Driscoll, *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Berg, 2011), 3.

⁶¹⁰ Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 3.

girls. Although the terms “teenpic”, “teen film”, and “teen movie” may seem synonymous, as Driscoll argues “teenpics and teen film might even refer to different generations of film for and about adolescence.”⁶¹¹ The term “teenpic” appears most frequently in discussions of commercial teen-oriented movies of the 1950s and 1960s, with scholars and critics preferring to describe later products as teen films or teen movies. Although the semantic charge of the various terms used to describe movies is by no means fixed, this analysis uses the terms “teen film” and “teen movie” on grounds that these labels seem most appropriate.

Many scholars purport to evaluate the “representation” of youth on screen but, as Catherine Driscoll observes, “An emphasis on adolescence itself, rather than on questions of film style, and a more sociological than formalist approach to generic conventions, is common in studies of teen film”.⁶¹² Timothy Shary, for example, describes his method as the use of “genre analysis to study social representation”, with an emphasis on the “different techniques and stories” present in youth-oriented texts.⁶¹³ However, like the majority of scholars analysing the Hollywood teen film, many of whom have backgrounds outside of film studies, Shary focuses on story and on selective aspects of characterisation. Moreover, many studies preoccupied with “realism” or, more accurately, social verisimilitude in the teen film do not acknowledge that the social “reality” is, as Todorov notes, “merely a further discourse”.⁶¹⁴ By paying little attention to teen films’ status as Hollywood movies, studies such as Shary’s *Generation Multiplex* and Richard C. Bulman’s *Hollywood Goes to High School* can only ever offer a partial account of the films’ representational strategies. Representations, as Richard Dyer observes, utilize “the codes and conventions of the available cultural forms of presentation”.⁶¹⁵ Narrative conventions and formal techniques are integral parts of the Hollywood system of representation and, therefore, “...restrict and shape what can be said and/or about any aspect of reality in a given place in a given society at a given time.”⁶¹⁶

⁶¹¹ Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 12.

⁶¹² Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 2.

⁶¹³ Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 11.

⁶¹⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981, 119, cited in Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 28.

⁶¹⁵ Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (London: Routledge, 1993), 2.

⁶¹⁶ Dyer, *The Matter of Images*, 2.

This chapter examines John Hughes teen films as part of Hughes' larger body of work, in order to identify key features of his "signature product". It also evaluates the movies as products of the U.S. film industry during the 1980s. Consistent with previous work on the 1980s teen film, I explore how these films negotiate ideologies of genre and class. Unlike many other studies, however, I pay closer attention to the importance of narrative and form. I also reflect on how these films utilize genre conventions and regimes of generic verisimilitude. In so doing, I position these movies within broader strategies of Hollywood entertainment, allowing for a consideration of how they invite audience identification and stimulate pleasurable emotions. By commencing my analysis with a discussion of *The Breakfast Club*, I will outline several of the textual features that recur in Hughes' teen films, signaling the approach and concerns of this chapter. It is worth noting, however, that, there is perhaps limited scope to offer original insights on the film because, as Catherine Driscoll notes, *The Breakfast Club* "is one of the most discussed teen films of the 1980s".⁶¹⁷

The Breakfast Club (1985)

The Breakfast Club is more like a stage play than a typical Hollywood movie. The movie's premise is extremely simple: Five different teenagers spend a Saturday in detention together and learn about each other through the conversations that they have. The characters – John Bender (Judd Nelson), Andrew Clark (Emilio Estevez), Brian Johnson (Anthony Michael Hall), Allison Reynolds (Ally Sheedy) and Claire Standish (Molly Ringwald) – represent five familiar high school types. As the film puts it, they are respectively "a criminal, an athlete, a brain, a basket case and a princess." The action takes place over one day and is confined to the high school, with the majority of scenes taking place in the library. This format means that the film foregrounds the actors' performances and dialogue. The students engage in lengthy discussions of their problems and discover that they share similar insecurities and all have difficult relationships with their parents. Rather than celebrating difference, *The Breakfast Club* seems to suggest that teenagers should find shared ground and compromise in order to get along.

The group's acceptance of one another is consolidated through a dance sequence set to Karla DeVito's 'We Are Not Alone', which is stylistically different from the rest of the movie, particularly in its use of overt camera movement, jump cuts and close-up shots.

⁶¹⁷ Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 49.

Scott Henderson argues that musical moments like this can be understood “in relation to the growing presence in post-classical cinema of a disruptive aesthetic associated with the music video”, a form that he suggests “breaks continuity and is anti-narrative”.⁶¹⁸ The extent to which rapid editing and excessive camera movement destabilise temporal and spatial continuity is debatable, however. Discussing New Hollywood cinema and “intensified continuity”, David Bordwell asserts, “the favoured technical devices have changed, but the spatial *system* of classical Hollywood continuity remains intact.”⁶¹⁹ Admittedly, moments in the sequence seem unrealistic, particularly the moment when Andy shatters a pane of glass by shouting. As Steve Neale observes, however, Hollywood’s strategies of entertainment are predicated on the audience’s understanding of regimes of generic verisimilitude, which allow for sequences that depart from “socio-cultural verisimilitude”, as a means of stimulating more affective pleasures.⁶²⁰ The music/dance sequence has a long history within the teen film genre and, therefore, the dance in *The Breakfast Club* seems likely to be within the bounds of audience expectations. Moreover, the sequence serves a narrative function because it reinforces character development and, as Henderson suggests, demonstrates that the teenagers have developed an understanding of how to “make do” within a confining social order.⁶²¹

The transformation of Allison (the “basket case”), in particular, confirms the movie’s message of conformity. During the first part of the film, suggests Curran Nault, Allison’s silence commands the attention of her peers and makes her a “looming and mysterious presence”.⁶²² Once she starts to speak, Allison makes some of the most perceptive observations in the movie. For instance, she notes that the question of a girl’s virginity is “kind of a double-edged sword” because: “if you say you haven’t, you’re a prude. If you say you have, you’re a slut. It’s a trap.” Nault argues, however, that the character’s “destabilizing influence” and, presumably, her power declines as she contributes more readily to discussion and becomes integrated into the group.⁶²³ Nonetheless, Allison’s lack

⁶¹⁸ Scott Henderson, “Youth Excess and the Musical Moment,” in *Film’s Musical Moments*, eds. Ian Conrich and Estella Tincknell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 152.

⁶¹⁹ David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 180.

⁶²⁰ Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, 34.

⁶²¹ Henderson, “Youth Excess and the Musical Moment,” 149.

⁶²² Curran Nault, “The Cinematic Quiet Girl from *The Breakfast Club* to *Badlands*,” *Feminist Media Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013), 308.

⁶²³ Nault, “The Cinematic Quiet Girl,” 308.

of conformity, self-awareness and outward-looking perspective mean that she represents the biggest threat to the status quo. Allison dreams of a world beyond the confines of the Chicago suburbs, arguing that she could “run away” and go to “the ocean”, “the country”, “the mountains”, “Israel, Africa, Afghanistan”. The movie contains any threat that Allison may have posed to the established order via a makeover sequence, in which Claire transforms her into a smiling, perky girl dressed in pink. Somewhat controversially, Anthony C. Bleach interprets the Allison and Claire’s “bonding over eyeliner” as a “feminist move”, in which the two “[share] in their empowerment via the application of beauty products”.⁶²⁴ As Nault argues, however, Allison’s makeover “provides access to her previously hidden body, salvaging her for male desire.”⁶²⁵

The movie concludes through the formation of two heterosexual couples. Claire unites with Bender and Andy suddenly finds himself attracted to the newly-transformed Allison, providing confirmation that she is now compliant with mainstream standards of beauty. Bleach argues that, through her instigation of a cross-class romance and her role in Allison’s makeover, Claire uses her agency to bring about the “utopian conclusion of the film”.⁶²⁶ However, her active role within the narrative’s resolution seems to be more the product of her class privilege than of feminist empowerment. Claire’s gift of the diamond earring clearly signals that she can choose to be with Bender because of her social status. Brian, “the brain”, is the only character who does not get a partner. Instead, he writes the essay on behalf of the group and then kisses it. The film suggests that Brian has to defer romantic gratification in order to achieve his intellectual goals. Timothy Shary interprets Brian’s “resistance to romance and to changing himself” as a sign that “he is the least conformist of the bunch”.⁶²⁷ Although he perhaps has the most promising future, Brian remains the lowest on the high school hierarchy. *The Breakfast Club*’s resolution remains unstable, however, because the permanency of changes to the characters and their new relationships is deliberately ambiguous. The unification of the group, and the formation of the two couples, does not fully negate their mixed responses to the question that Brian raises earlier in the film: “What happens on Monday?”

⁶²⁴ Anthony C. Bleach, “Postfeminist cliques: Class, Postfeminism, and the Molly Ringwald-John Hughes Films,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 3 (Spring 2010), 39.

⁶²⁵ Nault, “The Cinematic Quiet Girl,” 309.

⁶²⁶ Bleach, “Postfeminist cliques,” 38.

⁶²⁷ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 35.

Sixteen Candles (1984)

Sixteen Candles depicts the events that unfold on Samantha Baker's (Molly Ringwald) sixteenth birthday, as her family prepare for her older sister's wedding. Writing for the *Boston Phoenix*, Owen Gleiberman described *Sixteen Candles* as "a youth-movie hybrid" that combines "the anything-goes black humour of the *National Lampoon*" with "jittery adolescent anxieties."⁶²⁸ Similarly, *Variety* dubbed the film a "mix of 'Sweet Sixteen' fantasy' and some on target observations and fresh laughs."⁶²⁹ The movie combines elements from romantic comedy, family comedy and teen sex comedy, often using changes in focalisation to justify shifts in tone and style. While the film had a female protagonist and one of its main plotlines concerned a budding romance, Hughes avoided purging the film completely of elements of the sex comedies that had been popular with a sizeable teenage audience. *New York Magazine's* David Denby, who described the film as "an odd mixture of brutality and tenderness", suggested that the movie's "cheap laughs" were Hughes' response to "a market that rewards gross-out humour."⁶³⁰ Hughes countered that his decision to mix comedy and drama was not commercially motivated, but came out of his desire to depict teenage life "realistically".⁶³¹ Nonetheless, this approach was commercially savvy because *Sixteen Candles* contained elements that would appeal to both male and female audiences.

Many of the scenes involving Samantha depict interactions between the various members of the Baker family, with much of the humour consisting of sitcom-like observations on supposedly universal experiences of family life. The opening scenes clearly emphasise the film's relationship to both family comedy and to the television sitcom. A brief introductory sequence depicts a car driving down the street in a pleasant suburban neighbourhood. The following scene shows family members fighting over access to the bathroom and Samantha's siblings squabbling with each other. The character types draw on the audience's familiarity with the sitcom: the benign patriarch, the attractive and organised mother, the vacuous but beautiful eldest daughter, and the precocious pre-teen son. In a contrivance typical of Hughes' work, the wedding of Samantha's sister allows for the introduction of

⁶²⁸ Owen Gleiberman, "Bittersweet *Sixteen*: Burning the *Candles* at both ends," *Boston Phoenix*, 8 May 1984, C4.

⁶²⁹ "*Sixteen Candles*," *Variety*, 2 May 1984, 16.

⁶³⁰ David Denby, "Happy Birthday, Sweet Sixteen," *New York*, 28 May 1984, 96.

⁶³¹ "Bobbie Wyngat interviews John Hughes for *Sixteen Candles*."

extended family members. The grandparents are broad comic caricatures who seem intent on embarrassing Samantha, most conspicuously by groping her breasts. The grandparents' arrival prompts some of the movie's more class-based humour. For instance, one piece of comic business involves the matronly paternal grandmother cooking breakfast on the stove, attempting to catch the "trashy" maternal grandmother's cigarette ash with a spatula. The smoking grandmother then proceeds to open a donut box with a large knife in order to preserve her long, painted nails. Various other scenes generate humour through interactions within the family.

The introduction of Samantha, through a scene in her bedroom, signals *Sixteen Candles*' intentions to offer a more meaningful and female-friendly representation of contemporary adolescence. The scene offers an apparently privileged insight into the domain of the teenage girl, through the evocation of what Angela McRobbie describes as "bedroom culture".⁶³² The camera pans across the room to reveal a space that is coded as feminine, through a colour palate that is heavy on pink tones. Make-up, jewellery and clothes are strewn about the room, and a teddy bear sits on a chair. Posters for bands such as Culture Club, The Stray Cats and Squeeze adorn the walls and Paul Young's "Love of the Common People" plays in the background, firmly locating the movie in the 1980s. Samantha stands in front of the mirror scrutinizing her figure. Through close-ups on Samantha's face, the audience are given an insight into her adolescent angst. In contrast to the nubile, scantily clad female bodies shown in the teen sex comedies and horror movies of the early 1980s, Samantha's awkward post-pubescent frame is more the object of curiosity than lust. Her physical appearance seems to be stuck in an awkward transitional phase between girlhood and womanhood. In interviews, Hughes stated that Norman Rockwell's 1954 painting *Girl At Mirror* provided inspiration for the scene. In the Rockwell image, a girl sits in front of a mirror comparing herself to Jane Russell, with make-up and hair accessories at her feet and a doll cast to one side. Although Samantha is older than the girl in the Rockwell illustration, the scene in *Sixteen Candles* similarly suggests that the character is on the cusp of a transition into womanhood and that she too is comparing her body to an unattainable standard.

⁶³² Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, "Girls and Subcultures," in *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*, ed. Angela McRobbie (Boston: Unwin Hyman: 1991), 1–15.

Hughes uses the romance narrative and Samantha's insecurity to justify the only scene of nudity in *Sixteen Candles*. Quite unexpectedly, the film cuts from a sequence in the boy's gymnasium to a close-up on a pair of wet, pert breasts, accompanied by a "dong" sound effect. The next shot shows Samantha and her best friend, Randy (Liane Curtis), staring. The retrospective creation of an eyeline match indicates that the shot conveyed the perspective of the two girls. This sense of spatial relations is reinforced by the brief sequence that follows: A long shot of Caroline (Haviland Morris) showering, a shot Samantha and her friend, a close up of Caroline's face, then a final shot of the girls. During this sequence, Samantha and Randy jealously discuss why Caroline is apparently perfect. As Anthony C. Bleach argues, the movie presents Caroline as a model that middle-class Samantha must compete with but also emulate.⁶³³ This sequence in the girl's locker room is different from, for example, the shower scene in *Porky's*, in which PeeWee and the audience are only able to capture brief, illicit glimpses of the girls' bodies through a peephole. Via the scene's focalisation through Samantha, *Sixteen Candles* disavows any overtly sexual intent. At the same time, this focalization permits the camera access to the space of the girls' locker room, which means that the full extent of Caroline's nudity can be shown for the pleasure of the heterosexual male audience.

⁶³³ Bleach, "Postfeminist cliques," 37.

These images have been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 49 – Girls' Locker room Sequence, *Sixteen Candles*.

The depiction of Caroline is equally problematic when the focalization shifts to The Geek (Anthony Michael Hall). After binge drinking at a party, Caroline's state of inebriation is such that she is unable to stand or recognise her own boyfriend. She loses control of her body and her friends cut a large chunk out of her hair before Jake (Michael Schoeffling) bundles her into a Rolls Royce with The Geek. During the events that ensue, Caroline loses almost all agency and is reduced to an object, as The Geek props her up in the car to display to his friends and pulls her into poses for some Polaroid photographs. The focalization through The Geek positions these scenes as part of his quest to "bag a babe" in order to increase his social status. As in the teen sex comedy, the girl becomes a prop for the adolescent male's coming-of-age through sexual activity. The fact that their apparent backseat tryst is not shown on screen raises the question of whether Caroline was capable of consenting to sex, given her state of inebriation. However, the fantasy aspect of these scenes is made clear through the breaking of the fourth wall. After a collision between the Rolls Royce and some trashcans, Caroline throws herself at The Geek, who looks directly into the camera and says knowingly to the audience, "This is getting good". In this way, the film attempts to excuse its treatment of Caroline by emphasising the fulfilment of The Geek's desires.

Sixteen Candles is, as John Hughes noted, "to a certain extent, a fantasy" and the movie's romantic resolution may seem under-motivated from a realist perspective.⁶³⁴ Although Samantha is ostensibly the film's protagonist, she is passive for the majority of the film, having little influence over events. A significant part of what makes the movie enjoyable for audiences is Hughes' use of structuring devices associated with the "melodramatic narrative."⁶³⁵ Steve Neale suggests that the melodramatic narrative creates suspense and, ultimately, pleasure through "the production of discrepancies between the knowledge and point of view of the spectator and the knowledge and points of view of the characters."⁶³⁶ Samantha and Jake in *Sixteen Candles* are unaware of their mutual affection for much of the film. The audience possesses knowledge of the couple's feelings from an early point in the narrative, through scenes in which the characters express their interest in each other. Samantha remains oblivious to Jake's feelings and sulks at home, crying over her apparently unrequited crush. Even once Jake has resolved to ask Samantha out, the film builds suspense through a series of failed communications and delays. His attempts to telephone

⁶³⁴ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

⁶³⁵ Steve Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," *Screen* 27, no. 6 (1986), 7.

⁶³⁶ Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," 7.

Samantha are thwarted by her grandparents, who refuse to take a message because they think that Jake is calling for “sex”. When Jake visits her house the following morning, Long Duk Dong (Gedde Watanabe) informs him that she is “married”. Another potential obstacle to the coming together of the couple, Jake’s relationship with Caroline, is quickly resolved through a scene in the car park by the church. Following a conversation in which he apologises for handing her over to The Geek, they amicably agree to go their separate ways, conveniently releasing Jake from his commitment. By the time this scene has concluded, the audience has few doubts concerning Jake’s resolve and, although the moment of unification is delayed, the film signals the high likelihood of a happy ending.

The suspense continues through to the final scene of the film. Samantha is unaware of Jake’s actions because she has been attending her sister’s wedding. She emerges from the church, watches at her relatives getting into their cars, sighs and looks down at the ground. A cutaway shot across the street shows the audience that Jake is parked at the other side of the road and the Thompson Twins’ “If You Were Here” comes in on the soundtrack. Samantha then looks up and an eyeline match suggests that she and Jake are exchanging looks. The audience’s anticipation is built further when she looks behind herself in disbelief and then mouths “me?”. Then, framed in close-up, Jake says “yeah, you”. They both smile and walk out of their respective shots, meeting each other in a long shot of the steps of the church. The teenagers’ decision to spend time together, with a view to starting a relationship, is then ratified by Samantha’s father. In an eyeline match between Samantha and her father, he signals his approval. He then watches his daughter leave in Jake’s Ferrari. The film then concludes with a brief scene between Samantha and Jake. In the final shot, the couple kisses over a birthday cake and then the image is frozen. The use of a freeze-frame creates a sense of finality. The couple have achieved their romantic goal and what happens next remains unknown. Nonetheless, the moment provides a pleasurable resolution to the romance narrative.

The movie’s romantic lead, Jake Ryan, serves as a good-looking blank canvas onto whom the audience can project their romantic fantasies. Jake is the embodiment of physical and emotional restraint. In terms of looks and temperament, Jake is less a peer of the men of recent romantic comedy and more a descendent of the quiet and strong characters played by Rock Hudson in 1950s melodramas. In fact, Jake’s outfits resemble the clothing Hudson wears as Ron Kirby in *All That Heaven Allows*, particularly his red check shirt and

khaki pants. Whereas in Sirk's movie, the use of browns, greens and reds connote Ron's connection with the earth and his working-class status, in *Sixteen Candles* Jake's clothes contribute to the character's overall blandness. John Hughes claimed that this lack of personality was deliberate. Discussing the casting of the actor he stated, "I actually had to fight pretty hard for him 'cause they didn't think he had enough life to him. And I didn't want a lot of life."⁶³⁷ The Geek, in contrast, is extremely animated. He moves in an awkward, hyperactive fashion and talks rapidly. His bravado contrasts with Jake's quiet confidence. The scenes that take place between the two serve to emphasise Jake's desirability.

Long Duk Dong, one of Hughes' most controversial characters, serves to reinforce the normative whiteness of Hughes' protagonists. Dong is a haphazard composite of broadly "Oriental" stereotypes. Samantha's family refer to him "the weird Chinese guy" and, at various points, a non-diegetic gong sounds when characters speak his name. Dong utters American colloquial phrases in heavily-accented English and seems completely clueless when it comes the "American" way of life, for example expressing awe at the concept of quiche and using his cutlery as chopsticks. His appearance at the party is scored by The Vapors 'Turning Japanese' and later in the evening he jumps onto Jake Ryan, whilst wearing a kimono and yelling "Banzai". Both Helen Zia and Stacey J. Lee et al describe Dong as a version of "the model minority" stereotype, not only Asian but also funny and a "geek" or "nerd".⁶³⁸ Arguing against such interpretations, Celine Shimizu asserts, "while the Donger remains on the periphery, he comes into his own as a subject who won't accept being pigeonholed, but pursues enjoyment in his own terms."⁶³⁹ For instance, although he shares the white geeks' awkwardness and horniness, he actually engages in (consensual) sexual activity, albeit with a large, athletic girl. Nevertheless, Long Duk Dong's main function is to provide comic relief through crude racial humour.

The hierarchy operating within the high school in *Sixteen Candles* is largely organised by age, although the ages of the characters also correspond to their social class. The freshman boys are geeks and from the working-class part of town, the seniors are popular and rich, and

⁶³⁷ Hughes, Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows.

⁶³⁸ Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 118.

⁶³⁹ Celine Shimizu, *Straightjacket Sexualities: Unbinding Asian American Manhoods in the Movies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 115.

the sophomores, like Samantha, are stuck somewhere in between. The differences between social groups primarily serve a comic rather than a political agenda. In particular, the awkwardness and scrawny bodies of the freshmen provide a comic contrast to the athletic bodies and confidence of the senior jocks. While Samantha's comfortable, middle-class home is presented as the desirable norm, Jake Ryan's large house, complete with wine cellar, represents yuppie excess. Antony C. Bleach interprets the damage to Jake Ryan's house during the party in *Sixteen Candles* as a "gleeful celebration of the destruction of upper-class privilege".⁶⁴⁰ Similarly, Steve Bailey and James Hay suggest that the "out-of-control party" represents a "tentative reclamation of the family space for youth", in which the home "is freed from parental control and becomes the site of a social and sexual freedom."⁶⁴¹ The teenagers in *Sixteen Candles* treat material goods and property as things that can be easily replaced and repaired, suggesting a lack of concern for money. Therefore, these apparent transgressions of social and parental order arguably serve to underscore the teenagers' affluence.

Pretty in Pink (1986)

Timothy Shary identifies *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* as part of a larger "cycle of cross-class romances" within the teen movie genre that anticipated "the cultural re-evaluation of class in the Reagan era".⁶⁴² In these teen films, the device of the cross-class romance draws attention to the ways in which teen films negotiate ideologies of class and gender. Although class is an important context for the action in all of Hughes' movies, in *Pretty in Pink* class determines aspects of character and motivates the action. *Pretty in Pink* charts the difficulties faced by Andie (Molly Ringwald), a working-class high school senior when she dates Blane (Andrew McCarthy), who is part of a rich corporate family. Whereas Andie has to work in a record store because her alcoholic father is unemployed, Blane is, as he puts it, "the crown prince of McDonnagh electric." The divisions within their high school are clearly along class lines. Rich teenagers, Steff (James Spader) and Benny (Kate Vernon), are the antagonists and their actions are the product of their snobbish attitudes

⁶⁴⁰ Bleach, "Postfeminist cliques," 35.

⁶⁴¹ Steve Bailey and James Hay, "Cinema and the premises of youth," in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale (London: BFI, 2002), 221.

⁶⁴² Timothy Shary, "Buying Me Love: 1980s Class-Clash Teen Romances," *Journal of Popular Culture* 44, no. 3, 566, 564.

and arrogance. While Steff's dislike of Andie and his interference in her love life seems to be motivated by her rejection of his advances, Benny seems to loathe Andie purely on the basis of her social class.

Pretty in Pink opens with a sequence that succinctly encapsulates the movie's visual style and narrative premise. Howard Deutch's fluid camera work and use of transitions, working in tandem with the sound design, are consistent with a music video sensibility. The opening title cards – "Paramount Pictures Presents. A John Hughes Production" – invite association with the studio's brand and prompts the audience to draw on their knowledge of Hughes' oeuvre. The Psychedelic Furs' "Pretty in Pink" starts as the opening shot fades in, reinforcing the movie's connection to the song. The camera tilts upward to show a truck going down a dusty road in a working-class neighbourhood. This shot dissolves into a crane-shot that pans left, revealing a parking lot, some run-down buildings, and a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. The film's title appears as the camera continues to pan left across some railroad tracks, making a less than subtle reference to the metaphor of "the wrong side of the tracks". The juxtaposition of the words "Pretty in Pink" with the semi-urban milieu sets the tone for a story of individual triumph against a backdrop of drab conformity and class division. The camera continues to pan along a residential street as the same truck passes by. The text "Starring Molly Ringwald" is superimposed over this shot, emphasising her star-billing. The camera comes to rest on a small suburban house with a pink car parked outside, which seems particularly conspicuous in this setting. Compared to the lush green grass and trees of the suburban neighbourhood at the start of *Sixteen Candles*, the grey, brown and blue tones of the concrete, metal and neglected buildings suggest a world lacking in warmth and vibrancy.

These images have been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 50 – Opening Sequence, *Pretty in Pink*

The exterior shot of the house is followed by a montage sequence that consists entirely of close-up shots of Andie dressing for school. The sequence introduces the character as someone who expresses herself through her attire and has a penchant for pink. The sequence also displays Molly Ringwald as star, through extreme close-ups on certain parts of her body. Her red hair can be glimpsed in an extreme close-up of her ear as she puts in an earring and her lips dominate the frame in an extreme close-up of lip-gloss application. The audience does not see the whole Andie/Ringwald until Andie emerges from her bedroom, when a mid-shot reveals an attractive young woman in an eclectic ensemble. In *Pretty in Pink* style and dress-sense are used to signal class affiliation. Andie and her best friend Duckie are members of the working-class faction at their high school, the “zoids”, who express their group affiliation through their taste in unusual clothes and New Wave music. The popular clique, presided over by Steff, dresses in designer gear and, as *Time* magazine’s Richard Corliss put it, “already know how to use the tyranny of style to ostracize the poor.”⁶⁴³ Often this exclusion is implicit but, on occasion, Steph’s girlfriend Benny feels compelled to mock Andie’s appearance. In an early scene, she accuses Andie of buying her clothes from “five and dime” and, in a later scene, comments, “Nice pearls; this isn’t a dinner party”.

⁶⁴³ Richard Corliss, “Growing Pains: *Pretty in Pink*,” *Time*, 3 March 1986, 3.

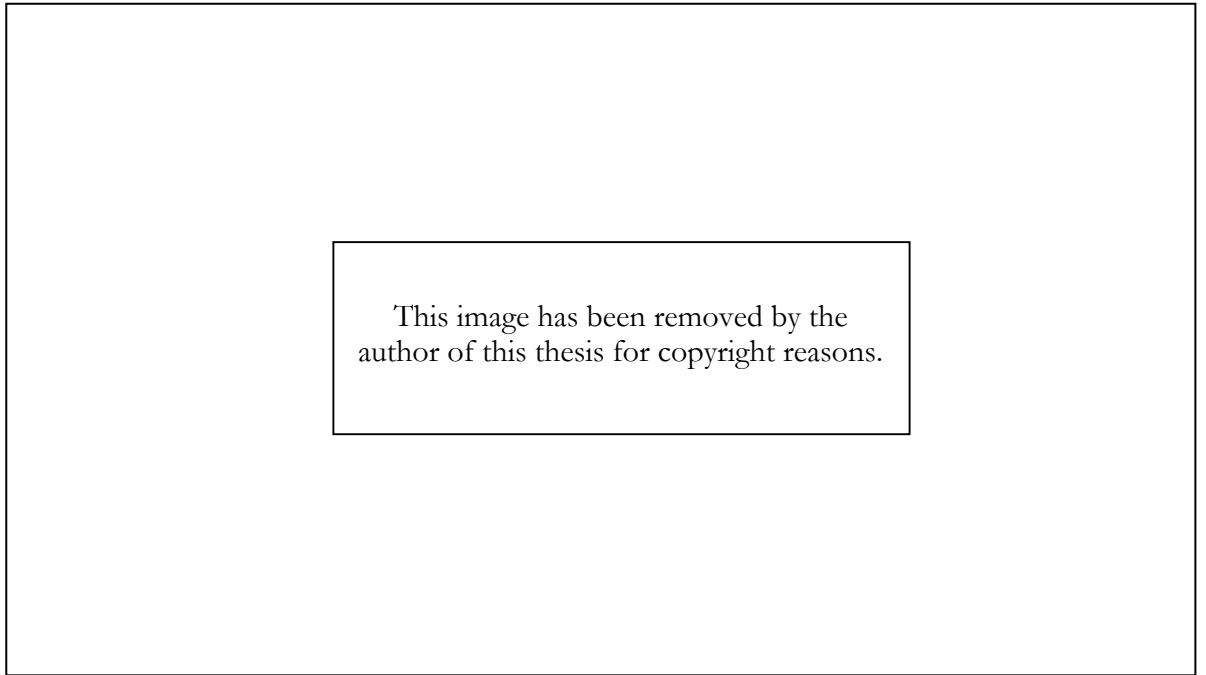


Image 51 – Extreme Close-Up On Molly Ringwald’s Hair, *Pretty in Pink*

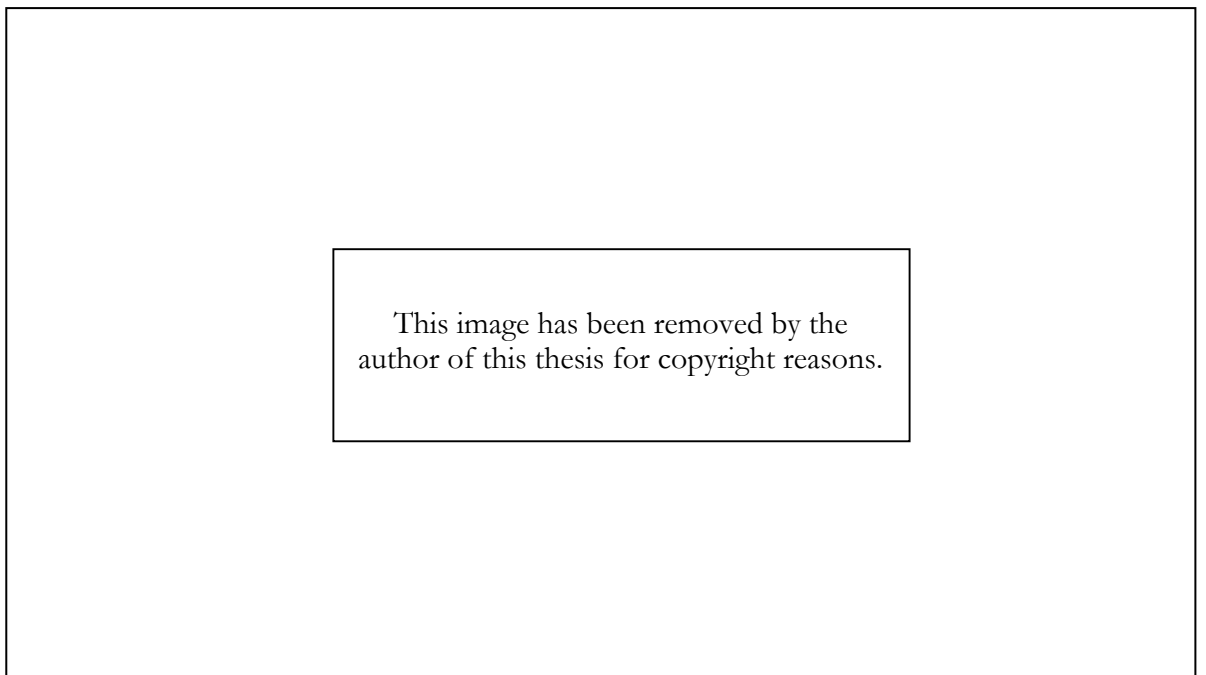


Image 52 – Extreme Close-Up On Molly Ringwald’s Lips, *Pretty in Pink*

Pretty in Pink presents the diversity of zoid subculture as a form of resistance against the social dominance of the “richies”, who are much more uniform in their tastes. The rich boys, including Blane, all wear linen suits. Although the girls dress in a variety of outfits, they are all from high-end stores. The focus of the zoids’ social activities is a nightclub. This space is populated by a diverse group of young people in unusual clothes and with interesting hairstyles who share an appreciation of live music. In contrast, the rich youths’ leisure pursuits seem to revolve around shopping (Andie spots Benny buying a dress with her mother in a designer store) and partying. While the zoids’ acts of consumption and social activities are presented as autonomous and creative, the richies’ hedonism signals their lack of originality and dependence on their parents’ money. Admittedly, *Pretty in Pink* makes some attempt to suggest that both sides of the class divide are antagonistic to each other. When Blane meets Andie on the schoolyard steps and, later, when the two of them visit the nightclub, he is met with icy stares and asked if his mom picks out his clothes. These moments make the contrast between the style of two social groups particularly visible. However, the film includes many more instances of the rich kids being mean toward their less affluent peers. The film clearly sides with the working-class teenagers and, because the action is largely focalized through Andie, offers few insights into the lives of the rich kids.

Pretty in Pink ends with Andie united with her upper-class ex-boyfriend Blane, rather than with her working-class best friend Duckie. Timothy Shary argues that the movie reinforces the message “that young women want men with money and will reject men more loyal and better suited to them to achieve that financial-romantic goal.”⁶⁴⁴ However, Andie’s rejection of Duckie has little to do with his social status and it is debatable whether he is “better suited” to her than Blane. Although Andie is clearly fond of Duckie, at no point in the film does she express feelings beyond friendship for her best friend. Of all the characters in *Pretty in Pink*, Duckie is the most invested in ideas of romantic love and grand gestures. While fast-forwarding through a mixtape, he exclaims in exasperation, “They just don’t write love songs like they used to”, signalling his belief in “old-fashioned” romance. However, Andie reacts to Duckie’s various romantic gestures with either laughter or irritation. For instance, when Duckie sings John Lennon’s “Love” to himself, unaware that Andie can hear him through an air duct, she laughs affectionately. In his most excessive

⁶⁴⁴ Shary, “Buying Me Love,” 573.

performance of romantic sentiment, Duckie dances and lip-syncs to Otis Redding's "Try A Little Tenderness". His wild gestures and outward display of emotion merely prompt Andie's embarrassment and irritation. Given the nature of the relationship between Andie and Duckie, it is clear that he is not the right man for her.

Although Duckie never seems like a plausible match for Andie, the union of Blane and Andie also seems unconvincing because it undermines both narrative logic and character psychology. While the happy ending is a convention of romantic comedy, even by the genre's standards *Pretty in Pink*'s Cinderella conclusion is noticeably unmotivated. Blane exhibits few qualities that suggest he is the right partner for Andie and the audience sees little evidence of the development of the characters' feelings, beyond their initial infatuation. While this level of superficiality seems more plausible in *Sixteen Candles*' heightened fantasy world, *Pretty in Pink*'s more realist approach demands greater explanation of character psychology. Once Blane's cowardice and passivity is exposed, there seems little potential for reconciliation between the couple, particularly after he cries when Andie calls him a "Filthy, fucking, no good liar". Blane does nothing to atone for his actions, other than turning up to prom alone and telling Andie: "I always believed in you. I just didn't believe in me. I love you... Always." OMD's "If You Leave" scores this scene, in an apparent attempt to confirm Blane's sincerity and encourage the audience to root for the couple. The song's highly produced sound and sentimental lyrics are consistent with Blane's evocation of "love" in an attempt to win Andie back. However, when compared to the understated use of The Smiths' "Please, Please, Please..." over a scene of Duckie sat alone in his sparsely furnished bedroom, the use of "If You Leave" in the prom scene seems to contribute to an underlying sense of superficiality. In keeping with the movie's message of style over substance, *Pretty in Pink* concludes with a stylized, MTV-inspired shot of the couple kissing in the parking lot in the rain.

Pretty in Pink's contradictory values are perhaps most overtly demonstrated in the transformation undergone by Iona, Andie's boss and closest female confidant. The owner of an independent record store, Iona is outspoken, sexually liberated and has a unique sense of style. The film's portrayal of the close relationship between Andie and Iona contrasts with the representations in many 1980s teen films, which either ignore the friendships between women or present interactions between women that involve discussion of men. As Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe suggest, many teen films

reinforce the “misogynistic belief that women are not able to form meaningful relationships with one another” and must be in competition with each other.⁶⁴⁵ In many respects, Iona is a strong, arguably feminist, role model for Andie. However, she sheds much of her individuality in order to secure a relationship with a “yuppie”, Terrence the owner of a pet store. She appears wearing a sensible blazer and says “I look like a mother.” Iona’s eccentric clothes and feisty attitude are reduced to a phase that she has been going through, containing the transgressive power that she possessed in earlier scenes. This feature is consistent with the new romances’ presentation of eccentricity as a temporary state that is “mild in form, or markedly whimsical, or... ‘artificially’ induced”.⁶⁴⁶ As Antony C. Bleach argues, “her makeover broadcasts the message that, at heart, what women want – even strong women like Iona – is to conform to traditional modes of class and gender.”⁶⁴⁷

Andie’s sudden reconciliation with Blane undermines the determination she displayed in the dressmaking montage and her symbolic gesture of facing the prom without a date. The under-motivated conclusion to *Pretty in Pink* can in part be attributed to the fact that Hughes and the studio changed the ending. The original ending shunned romance and instead celebrated the friendship between the two outsider characters. According to Hughes’ screenplay, Andie rejects an apology from Blane and the film concludes with Andie and Duckie dancing together “without shame or concern for what anyone thinks”.⁶⁴⁸ This conclusion seems more consistent with the structure and concerns of the narrative, as well as the character’s actions. Following a test screening, in which the audience reacted negatively to the final scene, Hughes wrote a new “Cinderella” ending. According to Howard Deutch, John Hughes was aware that the change would alter the political message of the film but proceeded on the grounds that the union of Andie/Ringwald and Blane/McCarthy seemed to be what the audience wanted.⁶⁴⁹ Deutch, who has since expressed his dislike for the change, arguably draws attention to the film’s contrived ending through the use of cinematography. After Andie and Blane resolve their differences, an attractive blonde girl (Kristy Swanson) invites Duckie to dance. Duckie breaks the fourth-

⁶⁴⁵ Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe, “Privileged and Getting Away With It: The Cultural Studies of White, Middle-Class Youth,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 31, no. 1, (Spring 1998), 114.

⁶⁴⁶ Steve Neale, “The Big Romance or Something Wild?: Romantic Comedy Today,” *Screen* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), 295.

⁶⁴⁷ Bleach, “Postfeminist cliques,” 41.

⁶⁴⁸ John Hughes, *Pretty in Pink*, Fifth Draft, 9 May 1985, 117.

⁶⁴⁹ Susannah Gora, *You Couldn’t Ignore Me If You Tried: The Brat Pack, John Hughes and Their Impact on a Generation* (New York: Crown, 2010), 149.

wall, looking incredulously at the audience, as if to acknowledge the implausibility of this turn of events. The ending's lack of stability serves to emphasise that the characters' happiness may only be temporary and suggests that the ideological conflict at the centre of the narrative has not been resolved.

Some Kind of Wonderful (1987)

Film critics and scholars typically characterise *Some Kind of Wonderful* as “a class corrective to *Pretty in Pink*”.⁶⁵⁰ The film concludes with Keith (Eric Stoltz) embarking a romantic relationship with his working-class best friend, Watts (Mary Stuart Masterson), rather than Amanda Jones (Lea Thompson), who is middle-class but is part of the rich clique. Although the movie's premise is similar to *Pretty in Pink*, *Some Kind of Wonderful* differs from its predecessor in a number of ways. Most noticeably, the movie's focus on a male protagonist is accompanied by a more active, individualist ethos than Hughes' other teen romances. Whereas Samantha in *Sixteen Candles* and Andie in *Pretty in Pink* are largely defined through their romantic liaisons and make romance their primary goal, the romance in *Some Kind of Wonderful* merely forms part of Keith's transition into manhood. Paramount's press materials described the movie as “one young man's struggle to be his own person, to withstand the pressures place on him by family and friends.”⁶⁵¹ Although Keith has greater autonomy than Hughes' female protagonists, the family figures centrally in *Some Kind of Wonderful* as the site of both conflict and support. In fact, the film bears similarities with the family melodrama, with the father-son relationship causing a considerable amount of Keith's angst.

In terms of narrative emphasis and character development, Keith's relationship with his father, Clifford, is as important as the teenagers' romantic entanglements. This father-son relationship becomes an important focal point for the film's exploration of issues of social mobility and aspiration. Keith's working-class father aspires for his son to study business at college and encourages his son to deposit the money from his after-school job in a college fund. However, Keith wants to be an artist, but does not have the courage to tell his father. When Clifford discovers that Keith has emptied his college fund, he confronts his son, demanding “Where's the fucking money, Keith?!” The argument that ensues is the most

⁶⁵⁰ Shary, “Buying Me Love,” 575.

⁶⁵¹ Paramount Pictures, “Handbook of Production Information: *Some Kind of Wonderful*,” 1987, 5.

emotionally heightened scene in the whole film. The release of excess emotion allows both characters finally express their feelings toward one another. The sequence consists predominantly of close-ups that draw attention to the character's facial expressions. Significantly, no music is used in the scene, drawing attention to the content and delivery of the dialogue. Stoltz's physicality and vocalisation in this scene are evocative of James Dean's performance in *Rebel Without A Cause* and invite the audience to identify with Keith. Whereas Jim Stark's problems in *Rebel Without A Cause* are linked to his father's lack of masculine power, in *Some Kind of Wonderful* Clifford remains a tough but compassionate figure. In spite of his lack of understanding of Keith's personality and interests, Clifford's actions are well-intentioned and he is one of Hughes' most fully-developed and sympathetic adult characters.

As in *Pretty in Pink*, the introductory sequence of *Some Kind of Wonderful* signals the characters' class backgrounds and establishes their roles within the narrative. However, it is a much more elaborate and fast-paced sequence. Shots of Watts playing the drums are interspersed between images of the other characters. Close-ups of Keith working in a garage are juxtaposed with shots of Amanda kissing her boyfriend, Hardy, in her bedroom. The rhythmic beats of Propaganda's "Abuse" and shots of Watts drumming help to unify rapidly-edited shots of the film's central characters. Keith's association with dirty manual labour emphasises his class status. It is also evident that Amanda is a sexually active teenager with a rich boyfriend. The "wrong side of the tracks" metaphor features again but is presented differently. Keith walks along the tracks and squares up to an oncoming freight train. Close-up shots show his neutral expression and lack of fear as the train approaches, as well as allowing for the display of Eric Stoltz's facial features. Keith playfully steps out of the way at the last minute, tapping the railroad cars as they go past. Whereas the railroad tracks in *Pretty in Pink* signal a boundary that Andie wants to cross permanently, in *Some Kind of Wonderful* their significance is more ambiguous. Keith does not view them as a barrier and enjoys moving freely between the different sides of the tracks. He has the means to achieve social mobility, should he choose that path.

In *Some Kind of Wonderful*, as in *Pretty in Pink*, the high school hierarchy relates to social class. The rich teenagers in *Some Kind of Wonderful* are much the same as their counterparts in *Pretty in Pink*. Hardy and his friends drive expensive cars, wear flashy clothes, socialise at the mall and at parties. They express contempt towards Keith and the other working-class

students. This dynamic is signalled most clearly in a scene where Hardy pulls up at the garage in his convertible Corvette. He antagonises Keith, mocking him for having a manual job. After he accuses Keith of looking at Amanda, Hardy tells him, “I’d recommend you keep your eyes and mind off my property.” Then he produces twenty dollars (“Ten for the gas and ten for the look”) and deliberately drops the cash on the floor. Keith and Amanda’s reactions to Hardy’s misbehaviour are conveyed through close-up shots, as both characters feel unable to react his comments. The rich youth’s insufferable attitude acts as a catalyst for much of the action in the film.

Keith and Watts are not affiliated with a particular social group. They are not part of the rich elite, nor do they not fit into the aggressive, leather-clad working-class faction. While Andie and Duckie in *Pretty in Pink* express their individuality through their flamboyant clothes, Keith shows his creativity through his art and in the décor the private space of his bedroom and Watts channels her energy into drumming. Although Keith and Watts socialise at a live music venue, their cultural interests are not a source of solidarity or resistance to the rich clique’s dominance. Instead, Keith forms an unlikely alliance with Duncan, a leather-clad Hispanic youth, and his gang, which is composed of a mixture of white, Hispanic and black “delinquents”. The basis for the young men’s friendship is Duncan’s appreciation of Keith’s artistic talent, as well as class solidarity. In *Pretty in Pink* the resistance of the working-class “zoids” to the rich clique is largely symbolic, but in *Some Kind of Wonderful* the working-class students have their revenge on the rich kids. The arrival of Keith’s friends at Hardy’s party signals a literal attack on class privilege, suggesting that that “brute force is the most imminent threat the poor pose to the sensitive rich.”⁶⁵²

The main advantage that Amanda has over Watts is that she has learnt to exploit the power she possesses as an attractive, sexually active female. Although Amanda later claims that she simply fears being alone, popularity and access to a lifestyle she cannot afford seem to motivate her tolerance of Hardy’s possessive and aggressive behaviour. In fact, she seems to enjoy playing power games with Hardy, using her sexuality as a weapon, prompting Watts to observe that, “Obviously, she gets off on it.” In a scene that implies that she uses her sexuality to manipulate men, Amanda flirts with the Drivers Ed. teacher, in order to get out of detention. Although the teacher’s obvious lack of sex appeal makes the scene faintly amusing, it is clear that she is a tease. The film ultimately tries to redeem Amanda, through

⁶⁵² Shary, “Buying Me Love,” 575.

the scene at the Hollywood Bowl in which she finally articulates her feelings. When Keith accuses her of using him to get back at Hardy, she points out that he's a hypocrite. She tells him, "You're using me to pay back every guy who had more money and more power than you. Paint it any colour you want. It's still you using me." To some extent, Amanda is presented as a victim of a culture that encourages men treat her as an object and her actions are, therefore, presented as a pragmatic response to her situation. Her refusal of Keith's gift and her decision not to date Keith nor Hardy is, as Timothy Shary notes, "a rare declaration of independence for any leading character in a romantic film," and demonstrates particular inner strength.⁶⁵³

Watts is an unlikely romantic lead. In particular, her refusal to comply with norms of femininity, in both appearance and behaviour, raises questions about her sexual orientation. In an early scene in the film, Duncan asks Watts, "How long have you been a lesbian?" He explains, "You have a little bit too much up front to be a guy, so you must be a lesbian." Although in many teen films such accusations are bandied about as insults towards girls who are not interested in male attention, Duncan's question to Watts is prompted by her dress-sense and demeanour.⁶⁵⁴ The scene that most overtly signals Watts' non-normative performance of gender takes place in the girls' locker room. The scene begins with a close-up on someone wearing a pair of boxer shorts. The camera tracks the shorts and then tilts up to show Watts is wearing the underpants, along with a loose-fitting white t-shirt. The sequence that follows is focalized through Watts. Close-up shots of Watts' face are interspersed with shots of Amanda getting ready at the far end of the locker room. Initially, the camera position suggests an over-the-shoulder shot, although it can be inferred that the audience is being invited to share Watts' point of view. Each time the camera cuts back to Amanda the camera has zoomed in slightly. The camera eventually lingers, in a close-up, on Amanda's face, as she styles her hair with a hairbrush. By this point, it is clear that this is Watts' point of view. The camera then tilts slowly down Amanda's body, to show her breasts under a white cotton camisole, then her firm buttocks under a pair of white underpants. The camera traces her figure, all the way down to her feet. Watts' pushing back of her hair and running her hands across her clothes, as well as the use of score, indicate that the sequence is supposed to suggest her insecurity. However, the scene can easily accommodate a queer reading, given the character's lack of gender conformity and her

⁶⁵³ Shary, "Buying Me Love," 574.

⁶⁵⁴ Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe, "Privileged and Getting Away With It," 111.

lingering gaze. Moreover, the fact that other girls in the locker room move in and out of the shot, emphasise that Watts' surveillance of Amanda is covert and illicit.

These images have been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 53 – 'The Girls' Locker Room in *Some Kind of Wonderful*

Irrespective of the politics of this decision, the narrative of *Some Kind of Wonderful* provides adequate justification for the coupling. The relationship between Keith and Watts differs greatly from that of *Pretty in Pink*'s Andie and Duckie. Keith and Watts engage in serious and sincere conversations and, although he is not always aware of her feelings, Keith takes his friend's thoughts seriously. There is clearly chemistry between the pair, which becomes particularly evident when Watts gives Keith a kissing lesson. Keith is oblivious to Watts' love for him, but close up shots of her reactions to various situations make the audience aware of her amorous feelings. The main obstruction to their relationship is not the interference of rivals or the family but the fact that Keith becomes distracted by the idea of Amanda. Although she is attractive, there is little evidence to suggest that she wishes to pursue a relationship with him. In fact, Amanda is the person who finally points him in the right direction at the end of the film. When he suddenly realises that he loves Watts, he chases her and then they embrace and kiss. "I'm sorry, I didn't know," says Keith. In response to his suggestion that she knew he would give her the earrings and, thus, signal his affection, Watts says, "I hoped. I didn't know. I had a feeling." This moment confirms that the final union of Keith and Watts was somehow inevitable. The film ends with the couple walking down a suburban street, away from the camera. The moment is scored with Lick The Tins' cover of "Can't Help Falling In Love". Although the final shot is taken from a crane, compared to the ending of *Pretty in Pink* this moment is much more understated and sincere in tone.

While the characters in *Some Kind of Wonderful* are more complex and ostensibly non-conformist than the teenagers in Hughes' other teen films, the narrative tries to limit deviation from the status quo, particularly departures from gender norms. Keith's interest in art is offset through his job as a mechanic and low-key dress sense. Watts' lack of gender conformity poses the film's biggest challenge to traditional ideas of femininity. Through acceptance of Keith's gift of a pair of diamond earrings, argues Timothy Shary, Watts takes her "first steps toward a presumably more feminized role" and through "attainment of heterosexual romance" moving away from "her apparent lesbian destiny".⁶⁵⁵ Although Watts' non-normative performance of femininity does not necessarily equate with lesbianism, the romantic ending attempts to counter any doubts the audience may have about her heterosexuality. Whereas *Pretty in Pink* suggests the faint possibility of reconciliation between social groups, through Andie and Blane's union, *Some Kind of*

⁶⁵⁵ Shary, "Buying Me Love," 574.

Wonderful suggests that these boundaries cannot be crossed without characters compromising their integrity. The working-class youths' revenge on Hardy provides a more robust and, arguably, satisfying response to their social oppression than is ever offered in *Pretty in Pink*.

Teenage subjectivities and negotiations of ideology

During the mid-1980s, Hughes' teen films attracted attention in the mainstream press due to their apparently new take on the genre. Without doubt, *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* offered greater insight into the lives and feelings of teenage girls than many earlier teen movies. Samantha, Allison, Claire, Andie, Iona, Watts and Amanda are presented as psychologically complex characters. They occupy central roles in these films and frequently offer perceptive insights on events. However, the female characters in John Hughes' films have far less freedom and agency than their male counterparts. In 1980s teen films, notes Timothy Shary, intelligent female characters are often "attractive and stylish" rather than "nerds", but still lack in other forms of social capital.⁶⁵⁶ The makeovers of Allison in *The Breakfast Club* and Iona in *Pretty in Pink*, who are amongst the least conventionally feminine women in Hughes', are clearly an attempt to regulate femininity but also draw attention to the performance of gender. As Maryn Wilkinson observes, in spite of its emphasis on traditionally 'gendered' values, the makeover sequence in 1980s teen film centralised notions of self-transformation, and increasingly opened up space for the celebration of the teenage girl's ability to construct and perform her femininity."⁶⁵⁷

Evidently, a preoccupation with romance and the formation of heterosexual couples in *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* serves to reinforce traditional gender roles. Hughes' female characters embody certain feminist traits but these are often compromised in order to achieve a romantic resolution. This narrative strategy is consistent with a broader trend in the romantic genre, which Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik have described as the "New Romances."⁶⁵⁸ These romantic comedies seek

⁶⁵⁶ Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, 33.

⁶⁵⁷ Maryn Wilkinson, "The makeover and the malleable body in 1980s American teen film," *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, (Pre-Published online Spring 2014). 5.

⁶⁵⁸ Neale, "The Big Romance or Something Wild?" 287;

to recuperate the traditional heterosexual romance on screen. The New Romances do not simply ignore the changes that occurred in the genre or in American society. Rather, the narratives acknowledge changes in attitudes to sexuality and women's social positions, but work to contain "any 'threat' of female independence" by achieving resolutions that appear to position women within traditional gender roles.⁶⁵⁹ *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* also use the romantic couple as a way to work through issues relating to the class divide. Although Hughes' teen romances have conservative narrative resolutions, they still, as Barbara Jane Brickman suggests, "foreground the concerns of the female teen in a nuanced way that was rare in the genre."⁶⁶⁰

As David M. Considine points out, the teenagers depicted in Hollywood cinema "have seldom been representative of American youth as a whole."⁶⁶¹ Through their exclusive focus on white protagonists, Hughes' teen films position whiteness as a normative identity. The characters in *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Weird Science* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* are all inhabitants of Shermer, Illinois, a fictional town in Chicago's North Shore suburbs. Shermer's slogan, "One of America's Towns", which appears in a close up on the town's sign in *Weird Science*, signals the location's apparent function as a microcosm of Middle America. However, the majority of the town's residents are white and middle-class. Of course, whiteness intersects with other aspects of identity in these films, most noticeably class and gender. As has already been noted, the actions of the girls in Hughes' teen films are determined by their gender and class. For instance, Andie in *Pretty in Pink* has to compromise but Blane retains his rich, white male privilege. The ending of the film, suggests Timothy Shary, "becomes one of distorted reconciliation between the rich and poor" where "the wealthier character does not have to abandon his class privilege."⁶⁶² Where wealthy characters are critiqued, their affluence is not the problem, but rather their attitude towards wealth and privilege. Characters like Steff in *Pretty in Pink* and Cameron's parents in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* are rebuked for their preoccupation with status and material possessions. At the prom, Blane points out that Steff's apparent dislike of Andie stems from the fact that he cannot possess her. He states, "You buy everything. You

⁶⁵⁹ Neale, "Romantic Comedy Today," 298.

⁶⁶⁰ Barbara Jane Brickman, *New American Teenagers: The Lost Generation of Youth in 1970s Film* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 213.

⁶⁶¹ David M. Considine, *The Cinema of Adolescence* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1985), 9.

⁶⁶² Shary, "Buying Me Love," 573.

couldn't buy her. That's what's killing you." While taking out his angst on the Ferrari, Cameron shouts "Who do you love? You love a car, you son of a bitch!"

John Hughes' teen films position non-white identity as the Other, but do so in differing ways. As Catherine Driscoll observes, non-white characters are relegated to the background in Hughes' films or are "crass caricatures."⁶⁶³ Characters such as Long Duk Dong serve to reinforce the normative whiteness of Hughes' characters. However, the few references to "African American" culture in Hughes' teen films suggest a link between blackness and authenticity. When Brian gets high in *The Breakfast Club*, his impression of Richard Pryor signals that he is more relaxed and willing to reveal his true self. In *Pretty in Pink* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* music associated with African-Americans is used to connote authenticity, a representational strategy that is particularly noticeable given the fact that the majority of the music in John Hughes' teen films is very "white." Duckie's lip-sync to "Try A Little Tenderness" in *Pretty in Pink* uses Otis Redding's vocals to suggest the intensity and sincerity of Duckie's emotions. In *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Ferris leads the crowd through his performance of "Twist and Shout." Michael Moffat argues that, "this climax is fantasy... But it is also communitas".⁶⁶⁴ He suggests that the young man "demonstrates an ability often valued in the American democratic ethos; to bring together, to de-alienate, otherwise estranged or potentially estranged groups."⁶⁶⁵ However, The Beatles' song is a deracinated cover version of a song originally performed by African-American artists. Rather than signalling the inclusivity of American culture, argues bell hooks, white "appropriation of black culture maintains white supremacy" by suppressing African-American histories and perspectives.⁶⁶⁶ In *Weird Science*, the relationship between non-white identity and authenticity is made much more overt, when Lisa takes Gary and Wyatt to a blues club. Through their interactions with, heavily stereotyped, African American and Latino men, the geeks learn to open up about their feelings and to express themselves with confidence, albeit using "ghetto" accents. These encounters ultimately serve to reassert the socially superior status of the boys. As Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe note, Ferris

⁶⁶³ Driscoll, *Teen Film*, 47.

⁶⁶⁴ Moffat, Michael, "Do We Really Need 'Postmodernism to Understand *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*,'" *Cultural Anthropology* 5, no. 4 (November 1990), 369.

⁶⁶⁵ Moffat, "Do We Really Need "Postmodernism" to Understand Ferris Bueller's Day Off?"

⁶⁶⁶ bell hooks. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, edited by bell hooks, (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 32-33.

Bueller in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and Gary and Wyatt in *Weird Science* can become “maverick” heroes because of their white, male, upper-middle-class privilege.⁶⁶⁷

While in Richard Vernon in *The Breakfast Club* and Ed Rooney and the Economics Teacher in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* are, as Thomas Doherty suggests, “overdrawn caricatures, no real threat, played for laughs,” the majority of relationships between teenagers and adults in Hughes’ teen are relatively complex.⁶⁶⁸ In their attempts to position the traditional nuclear family as the ideal, *Sixteen Candles*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* tend to foreground father-child relationships. In spite of their flaws, the fathers in these films are sympathetic characters who occupy a central role in their children’s lives. In *Sixteen Candles* and *Pretty in Pink*, Jim Baker and Jack Walsh clearly hold sway over their daughters’ romantic lives, but this influence is presented as motivated by concern rather than a desire for control. A number of scholars, including Tania Modleski and Stella Bruzzi, have cautioned that the representations of more hands-on and emotionally available fathers in New Hollywood cinema attempt to marginalize women, “shoring up patriarchy.”⁶⁶⁹ In a feminist appraisal of Hughes’ teen movies, Ann De Vaney argues that “the culture portrayed by Hughes denigrates women” and laments the films’ representation of mothers as “forgetful, bossy, abject, gullible, angry, alcoholic and neglectful of their families.”⁶⁷⁰ Similarly, Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe assert that mothers in 1980s teen movies “are stupid, vain, concerned with wealth and ignorant of their daughters and sons.”⁶⁷¹ Although these concerns are somewhat exaggerated, mothers in John Hughes’ films are always consigned to the margins of the narrative. Even so, through the absence of the mother, *Pretty in Pink* reinforces that the mother is essential to the success of the family. The film suggests that Andie’s family would function better if her mother had not “split” and attributes the father’s alcoholism to her absence.

⁶⁶⁷ Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe, “Privileged and Getting Away With It,” 110.

⁶⁶⁸ Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, 237.

⁶⁶⁹ Tania Modleski, “Three Men and Baby M,” *Camera Obscura* 6, no. 2 (1988), 79; Stella Bruzzi, *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Postwar Hollywood* (London: BFI, 2006), 191.

⁶⁷⁰ De Vaney, “Critical Viewing,” 4–5.

⁶⁷¹ Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe, “Privileged and Getting Away With It,” 116.

Conclusions

Even though the representations the films offer are mediated, Hughes' teen films document certain aspects of American culture during the 1980s. Moreover, the film's aesthetic strategies reflect their commercial origins. Part of the films' appeal is their almost overdetermined reliance on fashionable music and clothes. During the mid-1980s, the trendiness and topicality of the films, particularly *Pretty in Pink*, was an attempt to attract a teenage audience. However, the films also work hard not to seem superficial in their deployment of signifiers of "cool" and, instead, try to suggest an insider perspective on youth culture. Although soundtracks formed a significant part of the films' commercial packages, pieces of New Pop, New Wave and college rock music are carefully integrated into sequences. Thanks to Howard Deutch's experience on music videos and trailers, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* strongly evoke an MTV sensibility through their fluid camerawork and style of editing. The use of music often relates to character subjectivity or the more general mood in a scene. In other instances, music indicates affiliation with a particular youth subculture, acting as a mark of authenticity. The scenes in the nightclub in *Pretty in Pink* gain additional legitimacy by featuring the Rave-Ups and Talk Back who do not feature on the soundtrack album. Through these elements, John Hughes demonstrated a strong awareness of the tastes and sensibilities of his teenage audience.

John Hughes' teen films place particular emphasis on relationships within the family, a thematic concern that is rare in the sex comedies and slasher movies of the 1980s. *Sixteen Candles*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* ground the concerns of their teenagers through interactions within the domestic setting. In these films, almost as much time is given to the protagonists' relationships with their families as to their interactions with their potential romantic mates. In fact, in *Sixteen Candles*, Samantha spends the majority of her time onscreen bickering her siblings and engaging in awkward interactions with her parents and grandparents. Although the parents of the characters in *The Breakfast Club* are almost entirely absent from the screen, the teenagers' relationships with their parents are one of the film's main thematic concerns. During the film's "group therapy" scene, Andy asks, "My God, are we going to be like our parents?" To which Alison replies, "It's unavoidable. It just happens... When you grow up your heart dies." This sentiment clearly inspired the hostility that certain adult film critics expressed towards the movie. Speaking in defence of

the film, John Hughes stated: “what I was saying is that those kids are concerned about their parents. They wouldn’t talk the way they did about their parents if they didn’t have some concern for them.” The families in Hughes’ teen movies may have their problems, but the films show that the bonds of kinship are strong. For instance, in spite her persistent antagonism toward her older brother, Keith’s sister in *Some Kind of Wonderful* warns him of his potential social humiliation and wishes him luck in his scheme to prove the rich kids wrong. This thematic preoccupation with family values recurs in many of Hughes’ other films.

Chapter Five

Domesticating the Comedian:

Comic Performance, Narrative and the Family in John Hughes' 1980s Comedian Films

In his November 1987 review of *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, Philip Booth, a writer for the NYT syndicate, drew attention to the ideological tensions within the movie:

Planes, Trains and Automobiles, in the end, turns into something akin to a road movie in reverse. The wanderers of the '60s left home in search of the meaning of life. Page and Griffith try desperately – all movie long – to return to home, hearth, family and all the acceptable again trappings of middle class life... It's a surprising message from two actors whose earlier work – Candy on *SCTV* and Martin on *Saturday Night Live* and elsewhere – practically revolutionized the face of American comedy. Martin and Candy have come full circle, from the nearly anarchic to the easily digested mainstream, just in time for the holidays.⁶⁷²

Booth clearly felt that the film's overall "message" conflicted with its evocation of the road movie genre and the casting of Steve Martin and John Candy. Both popular and scholarly discourses have linked the road movie and comedian comedies to countercultural impulses. Similarly, the comedian is an eccentric, potentially disruptive figure, who is often aligned with marginal groups who lack power in American society. *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, however, aligns itself with the interests of WASP lower-middle-class and upper-middle-class protagonists and works towards reintegrating the nuclear family. By combining the elements of comedian comedy with a narrative that attempts to reinforce a stable social order, John Hughes's film attempts to domesticate the figure of the comedian and tries to contain the potential ideological disruptions that he represents.

⁶⁷² Philip Booth (NYT Regional Newspapers), "Candy, Martin add fuel to *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*," *Wilmington Morning Star* [North Carolina], 28 November 1987, 6D.

John Hughes participated in several movie projects starring several high-profile comedy performers during the 1980s. The *National Lampoon Vacation* series, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, *The Great Outdoors* and *Uncle Buck* all trade on the established personas of Chevy Chase, Steve Martin, John Candy and Dan Aykroyd. The movies' promotional discourses utilized the comedians' star images to attract audiences, utilizing their awareness of the comedian's previous work. As a consequence, the films have to negotiate and manage the audience's expectations of the comedian's performance. One of the central pleasures of comedian comedy is, what Frank Krutnik describes as, the "tension between performance and conventional narrative."⁶⁷³ The relationship between the comedian and the fiction is what creates many of the films' comic effects, as the "comedian interferes with the trajectory of the fiction, and the fiction constrains the comedian."⁶⁷⁴ As I will demonstrate, John Hughes' comedian films prioritise the conventional Hollywood narrative over performance. However, in order to fulfill audience expectations, the films deploy the comedians' personas in selective ways and at regulated moments. Often, the gags involving the comedians are integrated into the narrative or serve to demonstrate character development. Through consideration of the performances of Chevy Chase in the *National Lampoon Vacation* series, Steve Martin and John Candy in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* and Candy in *Uncle Buck* this chapter will demonstrate that these movies develop a more "domesticated" form of comedian comedy. This analysis will also evaluate the extent to which the 1980s comedy films written and, in certain cases, directed by John Hughes can be situated within a broader tradition of "comedian comedy."

Comedian Comedy in the 1980s

In April 1989, the *New York Times* printed a comment piece by film critic Vincent Canby discussing "an increasingly familiar kind of movie comedy-of-disconnection that is speaking to and about our times."⁶⁷⁵ Lamenting the success of comedies starring former *Saturday Night Live* not-ready-for-primetime-players, he asserted that they had contributed to "a succession of mindless movies made without narrative intelligence or a commitment

⁶⁷³ Frank Krutnik, "The Clown-Prints of Comedy," *Screen* 25, no. 4/5 (July–October 1984), 52.

⁶⁷⁴ Frank Krutnik, "A Spanner in the Works? Genre, Narrative and the Hollywood Comedian," in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, ed. by Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1995), 27

⁶⁷⁵ Vincent Canby, "Comedy That Smirks at Itself," *New York Times*, 16 April 1989, H1.

to anything except their own second-hand coolness.”⁶⁷⁶ What Canby found particularly objectionable was the cinematic presence of “a sensibility nurtured by the kind of television in which an actor is allowed to break up during performance, in this way to call attention to the actor as a “real” person, separate from his role.”⁶⁷⁷ In direct response, Sigourney Weaver, Chevy Chase’s co-star in *Deal of the Century* and Bill Murray’s co-star in *Ghostbusters*, sent a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*. The actress argued that these comedy performers were part of a longstanding tradition:

Are we really to believe that Bill Murray and Chevy Chase are the first performers to wink at their own work? Groucho certainly comes to mind, to say nothing of Bob Hope, George Burns, Mel Brooks and the great misanthrope Jack Benny... “Standing apart” is a time-honored comic tradition.”⁶⁷⁸

Central to the scholarly conceptualisation of “comedian comedy” proposed by Steve Seidman and Frank Krutnik is the notion that the comedian’s status as performer heightens the tension produced in most star-vehicles, whereby the star’s extra-textual image has potential to exceed their “character” and thus to disrupt the fiction.⁶⁷⁹ Neither Chase nor Murray are comedians whose “material” is based on jokes. Rather, their brand of humour is derived from an ironic sensibility and superior attitude. Evidently, for many film critics during the 1980s, the comic performance style of contemporary comedians did not conform to their expectations. However, Chase and Murray’s aloof onscreen personas can be understood as a self-reflexive strategy that draws attention to the conventions of the Hollywood narrative and the illusory nature of the diegetic world. In this regard, their work, and that of other comedy performers during this period, relates to the traditions of “comedian comedy.”

Steve Seidman’s research identifies recurring formal and narrative strategies across a range of movies starring comedians, from various time periods. His work therefore provides a useful foundation for thinking about how Hollywood movies accommodate the comedian’s reputation as “an already recognizable performer with a clearly defined extrafictional personality.”⁶⁸⁰ However, a major criticism of Seidman’s work is that he does

⁶⁷⁶ Canby, “Comedy That Smirks at Itself.”

⁶⁷⁷ Canby, “Comedy That Smirks at Itself.”

⁶⁷⁸ Sigourney Weaver, “Movie Comedians: The Virtues of Standing Apart,” *New York Times*, 7 May 1989, H3.

⁶⁷⁹ Krutnik, “The Clown-Prints of Comedy,” 51; Krutnik, “A Spanner in the Works?” 24.

⁶⁸⁰ Steve Seidman, *Comedian Comedy: A Tradition in Hollywood Film* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), 3.

not adequately historicise his analyses. Henry Jenkins, for instance, argues that scholars need to evaluate shifts in the meaning of formal devices associated with comedian comedy, in relation to historically specific production practices and changing audience expectations.⁶⁸¹ The limitations of Seidman's conceptualization of comedian comedy are particularly apparent when examining films from the 1960s onwards. The majority of the movies in his study are from the studio era and, therefore, the generic framework that he proposes struggles to accommodate films produced in the New Hollywood. Comedy performers who built their careers during the 1970s and 1980s often did not acquire reputations for traditional, gag-based stand-up acts. Instead, they typically had backgrounds in television sketch comedy. *Saturday Night Live*, as Frank Krutnik notes, "has proved the single most influential show case for filtering comedians into the mainstream."⁶⁸² During the 1980s a range of other shows also brought comedy performers to the attention of Hollywood, most notably *SCTV*. Although critics were often perplexed by the success of the former Not-Ready-For-Primetime players and their peers, they managed to attract a predominantly "baby boomer" audience who enjoyed their ostensibly irreverent, anti-establishment humour.

Acknowledgement of the film's spectators is a key feature of comedian comedy. The most overt way in which the comedian can address his audiences is by looking directly at, and speaking to the, camera.⁶⁸³ While more common in the studio era, the device is occasionally used in later movies, such as Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977). During the 1970s and 1980s, however, many comic performers preferred to adopt the more subtle strategy of distancing themselves from the film's action in order to signal to the audience that they are aware of its artifice. These comedians take an ironic, almost anti-professional stance towards the business of entertaining people. Rather than "inhabiting" characters with any considerable psychological depth, certain 1980s comedians like Chevy Chase exhibit shallowness and a lack of sincerity in many of their performances. In fact, their unwillingness to conform to prevailing notions of what acting involves caused critics to contrast them to professional "actors." In a 1986 *New York Magazine* review of *Nothing in Common*, for example, David Denby stated, "[Tom] Hanks is not a gloater, not crappy and

⁶⁸¹ Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 11

⁶⁸² Frank Krutnik, *Hollywood Comedians: The Film Reader*, 169.

⁶⁸³ Steve Seidman, *Comedian Comedy: A Tradition in Hollywood Film*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 19-25.

nasty like but Murray at his worst nor puckish and cheap like Chevy Chase. Those guys are comics; Hanks is a light-comedy romantic *actor*.”⁶⁸⁴

Chevy Chase in *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983)

Although *Saturday Night Live* was an ensemble show, Chevy Chase quickly became the focus of press coverage during the 1975-76 season. Although his performances were consistent with certain aspects of the show's counter-cultural tendencies, as NBC's vice-president for late night programming, Dick Ebersol explained, “His type of humor is the most traditional. He has the quality of seeming to get away with something, and audiences love that notion.”⁶⁸⁵ During his time on the show, Chase capitalized on opportunities to establish a consistent onscreen persona. With an athletic but lanky 6'4" frame, Chase's physique was particularly suited to physical comedy. “As a performer,” states Jim Whalley, “Chase benefited from a limited but highly developed range of skills, combining leading-man good looks and charm with expert physical slapstick...”⁶⁸⁶ Chase became particularly accomplished at spectacular, choreographed pratfalls. Press coverage at the time focused, in particular, on his portrayal of President Ford as physically inept and highly accident-prone. In a 1976 interview with *Time* magazine, Chase observed that, “Ford is so inept that the quickest laugh is the cheapest laugh, and the cheapest is the physical joke.”⁶⁸⁷ Thus, while many of his peers were focusing on relatively complex humour, Chase was willing to exploit more accessible modes of comedy. Much work still had a satirical edge but audiences did not necessarily need to have an in-depth knowledge of current affairs to appreciate the joke.

Compared to the other Not Ready For Prime Time Players, Chase was allowed to perform a consistent set of traits in his on-screen characters and was rarely expected to wear heavy make-up or costumes that hid his facial features. The show's producer Lorne Michaels noted that, “All of the [cast] are brilliant – the difference is that Chevy is always doing

⁶⁸⁴ David Denby, “Nothing in Common,” *New York Magazine*, 28 July 1986, 60. [Emphasis in original]

⁶⁸⁵ Jeff Greenfield, “He's Chevy Chase and You're Not, And He's TV's Hot New Comedy Star,” *New York*, December 22 1975, <http://nymag.com/arts/tv/profiles/48252/index1.html>

⁶⁸⁶ Jim Whalley, *Saturday Night Live, Hollywood Comedy, and American Culture* (London: Palgrave, 2010), 34

⁶⁸⁷ “The Nation: The Ridicule Problem,” *Time*, 5 January 1976, 33.

himself. The others are in character, and they're not as accessible as Chevy."⁶⁸⁸ These kinds of comments reinforced the idea that Chase was developing a persona that was an exaggerated version of his offscreen personality, as well as highlighting his ability to forge a connection with the audience through his comedy. Crucially, Chase secured himself a prominent slot in every show through his role as the news anchorman on "Weekend Update". His season-long stint in the news chair gave rise to his most famous catchphrases. Chase's deadpan delivery of variations on the oft-repeated line "Generalissimo Francisco Franco is still dead" served to emphasize his "ironic detachment to the absurdity of it all."⁶⁸⁹ By distancing himself from the subject matter of this and other sketches, Chase assumed a superior and knowing position. His major catchphrase, "I'm Chevy Chase and you're not," reinforced his onscreen persona's heightened sense of self-satisfaction.

Chevy Chase started his Hollywood career in 1976, leaving *Saturday Night Live* after just one season. In his first few movies, Chase struggled to capitalize on his reputation as a television comedy performer because he was unable to fully exploit his established persona and, therefore, did not meet the expectations of his established audience. Reviewing Chase's cinematic debut in *Foul Play* (1978), *Time's* Richard Schickel described him as a "talented comic" with "natural ease and charm" but lamented the fact that just twice in the course of the movie does he "get to do his famous impersonation of a klutz."⁶⁹⁰ Similarly, Chase's role in PG-rated *Oh Heavenly Dog* (1980), which was largely voiceover work, provided little opportunity for him to exploit or develop his star persona. *Caddyshack* was arguably the first movie to provide Chase with an opportunity to adequately trade on his *SNL* persona. With a screenplay by Harold Ramis, Brian Doyle-Murray and Doug Kenny and direction by Ramis, *Caddyshack* is much closer in style and sensibility to the kinds of comedy performed on *Saturday Night Live* than Chase's first two movies. The role of Ty Webb allowed him to play with the conflict between the two central aspects of his persona, his clumsiness and his apparent superiority. In one scene, for instance, he struggles to remove a golf club from his bag but then hits a hole in one while blindfolded. As William Paul states, "Chase's ineptness is, as always, a momentary and disarming diversion from his

⁶⁸⁸ Greenfield, "He's Chevy Chase and You're Not."

⁶⁸⁹ William Paul, *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 158.

⁶⁹⁰ Richard Schickel, "Cinema: Chevy's Chase," *Time*, 31 July 1978.

real ability.”⁶⁹¹ The movie reasserted Chase’s strengths as a comedian and reconnected him with his core audience.

Although he experienced mixed success, with critics and at the box office, during the early 1980s, Chase managed to cement his onscreen persona and style of performance. As the actor noted in January 1983, “My personality seems to have set in with people, and they like that. They enjoy knowing what to expect.”⁶⁹² *National Lampoon’s Vacation* was clearly built around Chevy Chase’s star persona. Chase plays Clark W. Griswold, a man who takes his family on a road-trip for their summer vacation. The narrative is propelled forward by Clark’s determination to arrive at Walley World, which, as producer Matty Simmons put it in the July 1983 issue of *National Lampoon*, is “kind of like Disneyland without trademarks, lawyers.”⁶⁹³ Clark’s decision to take to the road is rooted in his desire to connect with a tradition rooted in America’s past and to offer a corrective for his own childhood experiences, for eighteen years of summer vacations where his family “never had fun.” Like his parent’s generation, he views the family vacation as a way to “strengthen family bonds” and to outwardly demonstrate the Griswold’s “adherence to the ideal of family togetherness.”⁶⁹⁴ The movie primarily addresses an audience of middle-class baby boomers who experienced these kinds of vacations as children and who had started to have their own families.

Much of the comedy in the *Vacation* films is derived from Clark’s inappropriate responses to what would, in real life, be emotionally trying or tragic events. Upon discovering that he has accidentally killed a dog by dragging it along behind the car for several miles, he attempts to convey the sincerity of his apology to a state trooper. However, Chase’s exaggerated facial expressions suggest Clark’s lack of genuine emotion. In a later scene, upon discovering that Aunt Edna has died Clark decides to strap her to the roof of the car. When they decide to dump her at a relative’s house, Clark gives an improvised eulogy:

Clark: O God, ease our suffering in this, our moment of great despair. Yea, admit this kind and decent woman into thy arms of thine heavenly area, up

⁶⁹¹ Paul, *Laughing Screaming*, 158.

⁶⁹² Bob Thomas “He’s Still Chevy Chase and You’re Not,” *Associated Press*, 4 January 1983. LexisNexis Academic.

⁶⁹³ Matty Simmons, ‘Editorail’ [sic], *National Lampoon*, July 1983, 6.

⁶⁹⁴ Sussan Session Rugh, *Are We there Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 12.

there. And Moab, he lay us upon the band of the Canaanites, and yea, though the Hindus speak of karma, I implore you: give her a break.

Ellen: Clark...

Clark: Baruuuuuuch Ataaaaaaah Aluuuuuuuyah...

Ellen: Clark, this is a serious matter, I'll do it myself!

Clark: Honey, I'm not an ordained minister; I'm doing my best.

Hughes' dialogue undoubtedly heightens the absurdity of the situation, which sees the family huddled around a corpse wrapped in a tarpaulin in a lawn chair. Chase's deadpan delivery, which creates ironic distance between the comedian and the situation, clearly references the aloof persona he cultivated through Weekend Update on *SNL*. Given that the narrative is focalized through Clark, this performance strategy legitimizes the audience's laughter at moments of black humour in the movie.

Vacation also generates comedy by undermining Clark's superior stance. As William Paul notes, "A lot of the comedy in Chase's performances comes from his own conception of himself as suave and debonair while events around him conspire to puncture holes in that image."⁶⁹⁵ His attempts to seduce a young woman in a Ferrari (played by supermodel Christie Brinkley) cause him to almost crash the family's car and to begin absent-mindedly eating a sandwich covered with dog urine. In a later scene, he ends up skinny-dipping in the hotel swimming pool with the woman, only to be publicly humiliated when he screams because the water is cold and he wakes up the whole hotel. Rather than showing how his "pleasure-driven mentality pits [him] against a succession of killjoys, dupes, and other representatives of the social order, who work to contain and constrain [his] impulsiveness," the movie uses coincidence to suppress Clark's sexual urges.⁶⁹⁶ This strategy avoids addressing the moral and social implications of Clark's behaviour. Similarly, *Vacation* manages to negotiate the "demands of integration and responsibility for the male" signified by his wife.⁶⁹⁷ Played by Beverly D'Angelo, Ellen Griswold is an attractive and sexually available spouse, rather than a traditional maternal figure. Scenes of showering and skinny-dipping allow for the display of D'Angelo's body, particularly her ample breasts. Aside from satisfying an audience expectation of nudity, Ellen's presence permits Clark to

⁶⁹⁵ Paul, *Laughing Screaming*, 156.

⁶⁹⁶ Henry Jenkins and Kristine Brunovska Karnick, "Introduction: Funny Stories," in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, ed. by Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1995), 76

⁶⁹⁷ Krutnik, "A Spanner in the Works?" 37

transgress certain boundaries but sets limits to his behaviour. This does not necessarily diminish the comedy in the film. In fact, D'Angelo's timing and reactions to Chase's performance accentuate the humour in certain scenes.

Although the final section of *Vacation* is closest in tone and content to earlier comedian comedies, a psychological breakdown justifies Clark's subsequent erratic and impulsive behaviour. "Generally cast as an outsider or misfit in some way," observes Frank Krutnik, "the comedian presents a spectacle of otherness by serving as a conduit for energies that are marginal, non-normative or anti-social."⁶⁹⁸ In a scene that permits the kind of extreme comedic performance expected of Chevy Chase, Clark finally snaps at his family and launches into an excessive rant:

I think you're all fucked in the head. We're ten hours from the fucking fun park and you want to bail out. Well, I'll tell you something. This is no longer a vacation. It's a quest. It's a quest for fun. I'm gonna have fun and you're gonna have fun. We're all gonna have so much fucking fun we'll need plastic surgery to remove our goddamn smiles. You'll be whistling 'Zip-A-Dee Doo-Dah' out of your assholes!

Chase's manic delivery of the speech suggests a largely suppressed neurotic side to his character, previously masked by his muted, deadpan reactions to events. The scenes that follow show Clark: punching a man dressed as a moose, tormenting security guards with a gun and riding on theme park rides. John Candy's appearance in these scenes as Lasky, a security guard held at gunpoint, briefly creates a double-act, allowing Chase to further exaggerate his manic performance. The pair's child-like bickering, which culminates with Clark shooting Lasky in the buttock with a ball bearing gun, highlights how Clark has regressed to a child-like state and abandoned any pretensions of middle-class decorum.

The ending of *National Lampoon's Vacation*, however, seeks to contain the anarchic energy that accompanies Clark's descent into insanity. The film's climax diverges from that of 'Vacation 58', in which Clark shoots Walt Disney in the leg and is arrested for "attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, illegal use of a firearm, and two violations of the Beverly Hills noise code."⁶⁹⁹ In a 2008 article, John Hughes explained that preview audiences' desire for a happy narrative resolution meant that the ending of *National*

⁶⁹⁸ Frank Krutnik, "General Introduction," in *Hollywood Comedians: The Film Reader*, 3.

⁶⁹⁹ John Hughes, "Vacation '58 / Foreword '08," *All-Story*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2008): http://www.all-story.com/issues.cgi?action=show_story&story_id=389.

Lampoon's Vacation had to be significantly altered.⁷⁰⁰ He noted how, compared to prose, the demands of balancing incongruity and plausibility on film were difficult to negotiate. "The short story was designed to depart from reality and teeter on the edge of, if not fall into, complete nonsense," he observed, "I presumed the escalating turmoil worked better in the mind than it would on a theatre screen. I was correct..."⁷⁰¹ In the final version of the film, Clark convinces Roy Walley that his actions are legitimate given the pressure of taking the family on vacation. Ultimately, the film suggests that Clark's insanity is temporary and merely a heightened reaction to the events that have occurred. Although superficially plausible, given the events that have preceded it, and the mock-sentimental tone adopted in this scene, the ending seems fairly incongruous.

The representation of the suburban, middle-class Griswolds contrasts to the treatment of Cousin Eddie's family. The majority of the humour that occurs in the section of the film on Eddie's farm in Kansas is predicated on Eddie's lack of sophistication and the family's conformity to "white-trash" stereotypes. Eddie is introduced wearing a vest and a pair of trousers held up by a piece of rope and he almost always has a can of beer in his hand. He has five children and his wife is pregnant with a sixth. Anxieties about the dynamics of the American family are displaced onto Cousin Eddie's family, in order that they can be alluded to and then dismissed. The movie suggests that Eddie's treatment of his wife, for instance, is the product of flaws in his character and their ignorant attitudes. In addition, one joke, which several critics felt compelled to highlight, is clearly based upon the suggestion that Eddie engages in incestuous activities with his daughter. Eddie's daughter Vicki comments, "I'm going steady and I French kiss." To which Audrey replies, "So, everybody does that." Vicki responds, "Yeah, but Daddy says I'm the best at it." These kinds of jokes are part of a broader strategy within the film that asserts the white, middle-class superiority of the Griswold family. Throughout these scenes, Chase's and D'Angelo's facial expressions suggest their characters' distaste toward their "white trash" relatives.

Perhaps most controversially, this implicit sense of white middle-class superiority manifests itself in the presentation of African-Americans in the movie as "Other". In *National Lampoon's Vacation* the family make an accidental deviation into the "ghetto." African-Americans linger on the darkened streets, talking and dancing, jazz plays, cars are resting

⁷⁰⁰ Hughes, "Vacation '58 / Foreword '08."

⁷⁰¹ Hughes, "Vacation '58 / Foreword '08."

on bricks, police sirens blare, the sound of gunshots and a woman's screams are heard. Presumably, Harold Ramis chose to represent the inner-city, and its inhabitants, in this stereotypical manner, although Hughes' screenplay does provide some cues for how he envisaged the scene. At best, Hughes' screenplay is somewhat ambivalent in its engagement with racial politics. The initial dialogue derives its humour from the parodying of white middle-class attitudes to the deprivation of the inner-city:

Ellen: This is so dangerous. We have no business being in an area like *this*.

Clark: Well, look at it this way. This a part of the America we never get to see.

Ellen: That's good.

Clark: Oh, that's bad. We can't close our eyes to the plight of the cities...

Kids! Are you noticing all this "plight"?... It's – er - just making us appreciate all we have.

The comedy in the sequence that follows relies on the audience's familiarity with racial stereotypes. Clark politely asks a pimp flanked by two prostitutes for directions. The pimp shouts, "Fuck yo' mama." In response, Clark smiles and says, "Thank you very much." The next time he asks for directions, Clark says: "Say. Excuse me homes. Ha ha. What it is bro'. We're from out of town." Initially, the humour is derived Clark's attempt to mimic the "vernacular" speech of the ghetto, which sees him incorrectly substitute "homes" for "homies." It could be argued that the theft of the car's hubcaps whilst Clark is being given directions is inherently amusing. However, the scene clearly draws upon, and perpetuates, negative stereotypes of African-American men.

Despite the opportunity for more subversive humour that the liminal spaces of the road offer, *Vacation* tends to focus on how Clark's nostalgic vision of the road is clearly at odds with reality. Even though the movie's R-rating permitted the inclusion of distasteful jokes, profanity and nudity, limits were still placed on the kinds of humour in the film. Several of the jokes that are present in the screenplay but omitted from the final film concern the incest taboo. For instance, a moment early on in the screenplay describes Clark accidentally lifting his daughter's shirt to reveal her training bra.⁷⁰² A later moment in the screenplay includes a piece of dialogue where Rusty asks Audrey if he can have her breasts, while eating fried chicken.⁷⁰³ It should be noted that these jokes do not imply any incestuous

⁷⁰² John Hughes, *National Lampoon's Vacation: Fourth Draft*, 20 April 1982, 7.

⁷⁰³ Hughes, *National Lampoon's Vacation: Fourth Draft*, 72.

activity but, rather, their humour is derived from the possibility that behaviour between family members can be misconstrued. In part, therefore, the joke is about perception versus reality and the anxieties that circulate around inter-familial relationships. The decision to limit the kinds of comedy *within* the Griswold's nuclear family to everyday, observational humour not only makes it more easily for the audience to relate the characters, it also avoids subjecting the nuclear family to a sustained ideological critique. As it would turn out, *Vacation* was Hughes' most satirical screenplay. The films that Hughes wrote in the latter half on the 1980s, as part of his attempt to cater for a wider audience, work even harder to promote the family ideal and to contain the comedian's subversive potential.

Steve Martin and John Candy in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* (1987)

Steve Martin began his career as a comedy writer during the late 1960s, working on several television shows including the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and *The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour*. His mode of live performance was "anti-comedy" which, as Lesley Harbidge describes it, was "a comedy of disconnection and disavowal that would seem to challenge perceptions about the roles of the comedian and his audience in stand-up..."⁷⁰⁴ Through the development of a form of comedy that combined silliness with ironic disavowal, Martin distanced himself from the more politically committed stand-up comedians of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although some of his material was derived from older performance traditions, for instance the vaudeville staple of juggling, his act was a reaction to the joke-driven comedy of the fifties. As he would later observe, "I decided that to deny the audience the punch line was the secret of modern comedy."⁷⁰⁵ His early stand-up performances thus aimed to discourage audience identification with the performer. His comedy played with the fact that he looked like an "average insurance salesman," as he undermined the expectations created by his conventional appearance through the style and content of his performance.⁷⁰⁶ Martin's extreme style of delivery and deviations into absurd pieces of "business" emphasized the separation between performer and persona. As

⁷⁰⁴ Lesley Harbidge, "Audienceship and (Non)Laughter in the Stand-up Comedy of Steve Martin," *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 8, no 2 (November 2011), 133.

⁷⁰⁵ Richard Zoglin, *Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), 133.

⁷⁰⁶ John J. O'Connor, "TV: Incongruities of Steve Martin," *New York Times*, 14 February 1980, C27.

audiences became more familiar with the comedian's absurdist form of humour, notes Harbidge, Martin's performance played with their awareness of the separation between Martin and 'Steve', his stage persona.⁷⁰⁷

Arguably the first stand-up comedy superstar, by the latter half of the 1970s, Martin was playing arena shows and his records sold thousands of copies. Throughout the decade Martin reinforced his stand-up persona through appearances on numerous television shows, including *The Tonight Show*, *The Gong Show*, *On Location* and *The Muppet Show*. Appearing on *Saturday Night Live* during the 1976-1977 and 1977-1978 seasons gave Martin the opportunity to expand his repertoire of zany characters and to build upon the persona that he established on stage, as well as to cultivate his relationship with his fan base. As Richard Zoglin notes, "*Saturday Night Live* did for Martin what it couldn't do for the other leading stand ups of the decade: it enhanced and ripened his comedy persona, rather than diminishing it."⁷⁰⁸ Steve Martin's NBC specials, the first of which was aired in 1978, also helped to introduce a wider audience to his stand-up routine and sketch comedy during the early 1980s. In 1981, Steve Martin quit stand-up completely to focus on his film and television work. Navin in *The Jerk*, a movie that he co-wrote, was his first starring role in a Hollywood movie. From a textual perspective, the movie is a fairly conventional comedian comedy. "*The Jerk's* comedic momentum was achieved not by plotting," observes Jerry Mosher, "but by the visual gags and wordplay that replicated the self-reflexive, anarchic energy of Martin's stand-up routines."⁷⁰⁹ Rather than attempting to replicate the success of *The Jerk*, Martin decided to take on a range of roles, selecting projects on the basis of personal interest. During this period, press coverage of Martin also revealed that his personality off-stage contrasted starkly with his stand-up persona. As a consequence, during the 1980s, Martin distanced himself from his stand-up persona and struggled to retain the interest of his established fan base. *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* marked Martin's move into more domestic comedy.

Whereas Martin made his name in stand-up, his *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* co-star John Candy came from a background in improvisational comedy. After working in the Second

⁷⁰⁷ Harbidge, "Audienceship and (Non)Laughter in the Stand-up Comedy of Steve Martin," 10-14

⁷⁰⁸ Zoglin, *Comedy at the Edge*, 136

⁷⁰⁹ Jerry Mosher, "Penny Wise and Pound Foolish: Steve Martin and John Candy," *Acting For America: Movie Stars of the 1980s*, ed. Robert Eberwein (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 246.

City's Toronto stage show, he was part of the cast of *SCTV*. Aside from a brief absence during the 1980-1981 season, Candy worked on *SCTV* from 1976 until 1984.⁷¹⁰ Until the show was picked up by NBC in 1981, it had a fairly limited reach, starting on a small regional network then moving to syndication in Canada and parts of the U.S. in the late 1970s. The move to NBC brought the show and its stars, including Candy, to the attention of a much broader audience, albeit consisting of late-night television viewers. The crucial difference between *SCTV* and *SNL* was that it was not live but recorded. Unlike their *Saturday Night Live* counterparts, who often performed "nonimpersonations", which were "based more on attitude than resemblance," Candy and his *SCTV* peers paid close attention to voice, physicality and characterization.⁷¹¹ During his time on *SCTV*, Candy developed an extensive repertoire of original characters and impersonations. His original creations included television personality Johnny La Rue, 3-D horror auteur Doctor Tongue and Leutonian Polka musician Yosh Shmenge. As part of Hollywood's attempts to cash-in on the popularity of sketch comedy performers, Candy and his *SCTV* peers, including Eugene Levy and Rick Moranis, were offered roles in various movies during the 1980s.

John Candy's early Hollywood film career has been characterized as a "a string of flops...that drew audiences on the basis of the headliner's likeability, regardless of negative reviews."⁷¹² Reviewers often remarked upon Candy's performances, even when they disliked the movie itself. All of Candy's films during this period placed him in an all male group (*1941* [1979], *Stripes* [1981], *Going Berserk* [1983] and *Spaceballs* [1987]) or with another male comedy performer (*Brewster's Millions*, *Volunteers* and *Armed and Dangerous*). Arguably, Candy's breakthrough role was as Freddie Bauer in *Splash*. His first solo vehicle was *Summer Rental*, which was directed by Carl Reiner who collaborated with Steve Martin on *The Jerk*. *Variety*'s reviewer described the movie as "more a collection of bits... than a coherent story."⁷¹³ But they added, "John Candy manages to elevate some of those bits to the hilarious and therein lies the film's appeal."⁷¹⁴ Similarly, Janet Maslin suggested that,

⁷¹⁰ He left *SCTV*'s main cast in 1983 but returned as a guest in several episodes during the following season.

⁷¹¹ Jeffrey P. Jones, "With All Due Respect: Satirizing Presidents from *Saturday Night Live* to *Lil' Bush*," in *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, ed. Jeffrey Jones and Ethan Thompson (2009), 41.

⁷¹² Jerry Mosher, 'Penny Wise and Pound Foolish: Steve Martin and John Candy,' *Acting For America*, p. 258.

⁷¹³ "Summer Rental," *Variety*, 31 December 1984.

⁷¹⁴ "Summer Rental," *Variety*, 31 December 1984.

“Candy’s big, blustery presence is the only thing really holding it together.”⁷¹⁵ Adding, “Candy is fun to watch under any circumstances.”⁷¹⁶ Despite his presence in numerous movies that were critically and commercially unsuccessful, many critics and journalists demonstrated an unerring faith in Candy’s abilities as a performer and his potential for movie stardom. The key to Candy’s popularity and his onscreen persona was his likeability offscreen. Several interviews published in the mid to late-1980s offer a consistent portrayal of Candy as “a warm and likeable human being” who “is simply incapable of projecting mean-spiritedness.”⁷¹⁷ Similarly, in his television appearances, such as on *Late Night With David Letterman*, Candy came across as nervous and self-deprecatingly modest. It was this funny but warm and modest persona that John Hughes sought to cultivate in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*. Candy certainly felt that the movie suited his established persona and abilities as performer. He noted, “It seemed like it was written for me.”⁷¹⁸

Planes, Trains and Automobiles follows marketing executive Neal Page’s (Steve Martin) attempt to get home to Chicago in time for Thanksgiving, after his flight from New York to Chicago O’Hare is diverted to Wichita, Kansas. At various points in his journey, Neal crosses paths with Del Griffith (John Candy), a well-intentioned but irritating and somewhat boorish travelling salesman. The conventions of the screwball road movie give the film a structural logic, “using the energy of the couple’s friction and mutual frustration to drive the narrative forward.”⁷¹⁹ Indeed, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* generates much of its comedy through the stark contrasts between its two protagonists. One of the ways that the movie establishes the difference between Neal and Del is via a scenario reminiscent of the “meet cute”. The two men first encounter each other briefly during an altercation over a taxi during rush hour in New York. After battling his way to the airport on a bus, Neal sits opposite Del in the airport lounge. Del is reading a pornographic novel called *The Canadian Mounted*. He is not wearing any shoes and his belongings and various newspapers have spread to fill the space around him. His buttermilk yellow shirt stands out in a sea of drab greys, browns and dark blues. Del tries to strike up a conversation with Neal, asking if he knows him from somewhere. Suddenly, Neal recognizes Del and

⁷¹⁵ Janet Maslin, “*Summer Rental*,” *New York Times*, 9 August 1985, C13.

⁷¹⁶ Janet Maslin, “*Summer Rental*.”

⁷¹⁷ Phil Dello, “Some Candy Talking!” *Graffiti*, January 1986, 45.

⁷¹⁸ Paramount Pictures Corporation, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Handbook of Production Information*, 1987, 3

⁷¹⁹ Tamar Jeffers McDonald, *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (London: Wallflower, 2007), 45.

aggressively tells him, “You stole my cab.” Del’s bumbling attempts to apologise simply serve to further irritate Neal. From this point forward, however, their fates are intertwined.

Del and Neal also embody differing attitudes to the body and its relation to space. Del’s unrestrained and public display of his consumption of unhealthy food, alcohol and cigarettes suggests his *joie de vivre*. Bakhtin states that, “Eating and drinking are one of the most significant manifestations of the grotesque body. The distinctive character of this body is its open unfinished nature, its interaction with the world.”⁷²⁰ Conversely, for the majority of the film, Neal demonstrates bodily discipline and tries to regulate his bodily functions, including his intake of food. For the most part, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* suggests that Neal is too neurotic and disconnected from his social and natural environment. As Mary Russo observes, “The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected with the rest of the world.”⁷²¹ When Del offers to buy him a hotdog at the airport, he states, “I’m kind of picky about what I eat.” Throughout the film, Steve Martin’s facial expressions signal Neal’s distaste towards Del’s lack of restraint and his personal habits. After the scene in the airport lounge, Neal finds himself relegated from first class to coach and ends up sitting next to Del. Candy’s ample frame fills the plane seat, encroaching on Martin’s personal space. Del proceeds to take his shoes off and flicks his socks close to Neal’s face. The yuppie says nothing, but registers his displeasure by twitching in his seat and signing loudly. Neal finally snaps following a carefully paced scene in the bathroom at the dilapidated Braidwood Inn. Del has clearly greatly enjoyed his ablutions and has created a mess in the bathroom. After enduring a shower of dramatically varying temperatures, Neal squelches across the floor, which is covered with discarded towels, to discover that only a small facecloth is dry. Martin’s physicality in this scene conveys Neal’s neurotic attitude to cleanliness, as he twitchily dries himself while trying to avoid touching anything. Finally, he ends up with Candy’s oversize underpants on his face, having mistaken them for a washcloth. The humour in this scene is clearly derived from the incremental worsening of Neal’s ordeal and the comic tension caused by his struggle to keep his emotions in check.

⁷²⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rebels and His World* [Translation by Helen Iswolsky], (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 281.

⁷²¹ Mary Russo, “Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory,” in Teresa de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, 219.

Through Candy's performance and Hughes' screenplay and direction, Del Griffith is presented as a carnivalesque figure. Del is clearly at ease with his body. Compared to Martin's twitchy mannerisms, Candy's uninhibited and fluid movement reinforces Del's rejection of bodily restraint. The scene in which Candy bops and sings along to Ray Charles' 'Mess Around' embodies Del's ability to embrace pleasure and express his enjoyment through his body. Although he is sat behind a steering wheel, Candy gives a highly animated and expressive performance. This scene contrasts to many dance performances in Hollywood musicals, which:

[contain] the cultural anxiety that the grotesque body will erupt (unexpectedly) from the classical body, shattering the illusion of ease and grace by the disruptive presence of fleshy experience – heavy breathing, sweat, technical mistakes, physical injury...⁷²²

Dragging on a cigarette, he goes through a series of gestures and movements that increase in size and intensity. Apparently unaware of the car swerving dangerously close to the icy verge, he plays an invisible piano with his eyes closed. After a brief moment of air saxophone, he takes both hands of the steering wheel to dance and almost loses control of the car. Further adding to the sense of movement, the sequence cuts between shots from a range of angles within the car, which are interspersed with exterior shots of the car on the freeway. The "exaggerated physicality" of many comedy performers, notes Frank Krutnik, positions them as "grotesque bodies [that] resist cultural discipline and are identified with spontaneity, creative renewal, and egalitarianism."⁷²³ Because Neal is asleep, the focalization of the narrative shifts to Del and the audience is thus encouraged to share in his delight and sense of physical liberation.

Through its depiction of a wealthy character forced to interact with ordinary working-class Americans, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* references Depression Era screwball comedies, particularly *It Happened One Night*. As their journey proceeds, Neal and Del are reduced to using lower forms of transportation (a plane, a taxi, a train, the bus and hitchhiking). On the bus journey to Chicago, in a scene that references the bus passengers' rendition of "The Man on the Flying Trapeze" in *It Happened One Night*, Neal, Del and their fellow

⁷²² Ann Cooper Albright, "Strategic Abilities: Negotiating the Disabled Body in Dance," in *Moving History/ Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Dillis and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 62.

⁷²³ Frank Krutnik, "Mutinies Wednesdays and Saturdays: Carnivalesque Comedy and the Marx Brothers," in *A Companion to Film Comedy*, ed. Andrew Horton and Joanna Rapf (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 91.

travellers engage in a sing-along. Neal's choice of song, "Three Coins in the Fountain", a middlebrow hit from the 1950s, is met with silence. In contrast, when Del breaks into the theme song from *The Flintstones* he is joined by a rousing chorus. Although Neal is a marketing executive, it is clear that he only understands people's tastes and behaviour in the abstract. In contrast, Del is able to relate to his customers, a point emphasised in a montage sequence which shows him selling shower curtain rings as earrings, using his friendly face-to-face patter to make some cash. Kathleen Moran and Michael Rogin argue that the Depression Era road movie, in both its comic and melodramatic variants, "set up the road as a liminal space", which offers the potential for social transformation: "Outside convention, neither the city nor the country, the road generates new myths and new alliances. Artificial barriers break down, impossible connections are made, social relations are reinvented and new communities form."⁷²⁴ *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, in contrast, focuses on individual personal development. Although Neal learns from his experiences and grows to accept Del, he remains distanced from ordinary people.

In particular contrast to the sympathetic, although occasionally clumsy, portrayals of America's poor in 1930s road movies, *Planes Trains and Automobiles* denigrates "white trash". The movie, much like *National Lampoon's Vacation*, ridicules characters of a lower social status to the protagonists. This strategy is most explicit when the movie introduces Owen, a roughneck who pulls up in a battered pick-up truck outside their motel. Reaction shots document Neal and Del's disgust as Owen continues to snort and swill his saliva. In the middle of the scene, Del precipitates a handshake out of an awkward sense of social protocol and then Neal follows suit, although this time Owen's hand is covered with spit. The two men look particularly aghast when Owen comments that his wife's "first baby come out sideways and she didn't scream or nuthin'." By publicly ejecting his body fluids and alluding to the female body and childbirth, he refers to two of the types of abjection highlighted by Julia Kristeva.⁷²⁵ Whereas the movie's representation of Del's articulates the utopianism and communality of Bakhtin's grotesque body, Owen's body and behaviour

⁷²⁴ Kathleen Moran and Michael Rogin, "'What's the matter with Capra?': *Sullivan's Travels and the Popular Front*," *Representations* 71 (Summer 2000), 118.

⁷²⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, [Trans. Leon S. Roudiez] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 32-55.

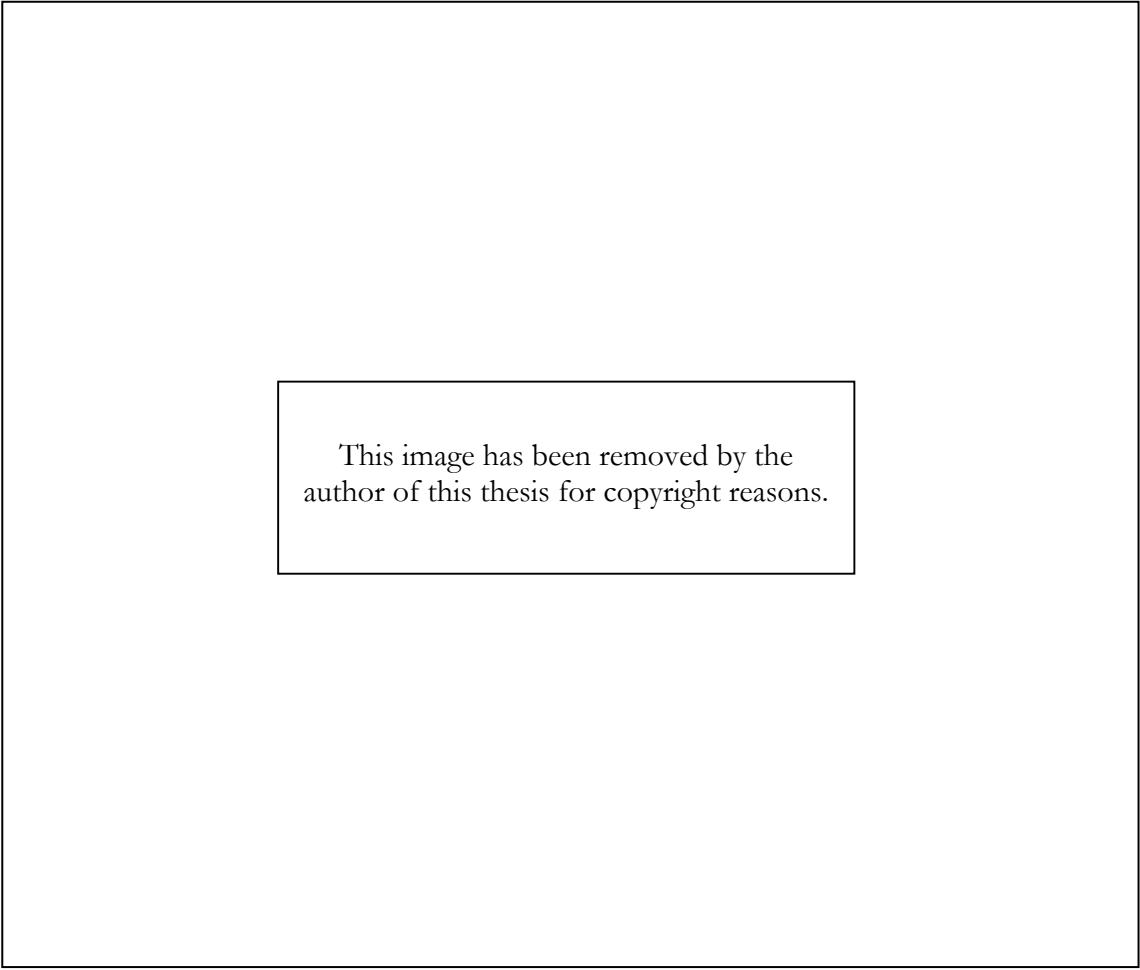
transgress the bounds of acceptability.⁷²⁶ The representation of Owen in this scene is consistent with a wider cultural attitude toward “white trash” that:

[insists] on complete social distance from problematic white bodies, from the actions, smells and sounds of whites who disrupted the social decorums that have supported the hegemonic, unmarked status of whiteness as a normative identity in [the United States].⁷²⁷

In this way, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* creates boundaries between lower-middle-class men, like Del, and “white trash” like Owen. By cutting between shots that suggest Neal and Del’s perspective and reaction shots that record their stunned responses, the audience is encouraged to share in their curiosity and disgust.

⁷²⁶ Although a number of analyses conflate the grotesque with the abject, they are not the same. Whereas Bakhtin’s grotesque body is a potentially positive force, Kristeva’s abject body is more ambivalent. Sue Vice offers a succinct discussion of the connections and distinctions between the two concepts. Sue Vice, “Bakhtin and Kristeva: Grotesque Body, Abject Self,” *Face to Face: Bakhtin and Russia in the West*, ed. Carol Adlam et al, 160-174.

⁷²⁷ John Hartigan, “Unpopular Culture: The Case of ‘White Trash’,” in *Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (1997), 317.



This image has been removed by the
author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 54 – Owen: The Abject “White Trash” Body

Ina Rae Hark argues that *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* and other 1980s yuppie road movies are open to “queer readings” and experience “difficulty in bringing closure to their buddies’ relationships.”⁷²⁸ Although the liminal spaces associated with the road, particularly motels, offer the potential to destabilise masculine identities, Neal and Del’s heterosexual masculinity remains intact. Admittedly, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* highlights anxieties that men feel when interacting with other men outside of clearly codified social situations. This nervousness is most clearly signaled in the scene where Neal and Del wake up spooning. The sequence attempts to generate humour from the depiction of a bizarre burlesque of heterosexual marriage, with the two men embracing like husband and wife. The use of “Back in Baby’s Arms” on the soundtrack reinforces this idea. The character’s reactions to the situation indicate that they are anxious not to be perceived as gay. They leap from the bed and then proceed to briefly mutter some comments about the Chicago Bears in mock-macho voices. The scene does not imply homosexual attraction between the two men, however. As Mark Simpson suggests, in relation to comic representations of men sharing beds, the “point of these connotations is not to affirm or proclaim homosexuality but to raise the spectre of it so that it can be dismissed.”⁷²⁹ In its temporary transgression of the culturally-constructed boundaries of physical intimacy between men, this comic moment reasserts the limits placed on masculine physical interactions. In *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, cutaway scenes of Neal’s wife and the characters’ conversations about their wives frequently reassert the link between masculinity and heterosexual marriage. From an ideological perspective, the movie’s conclusion echoes screwball’s affirmation of the individual and societal benefits of marriage. The narrative’s resolution reintegrates Del into middle-class society, by granting his wish for a friend and a family, and reunites Neal and his seemingly perfect suburban family. The significant difference, however, is that screwball movies have to argue in favour of matrimony through a process of negotiation, but in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* marriage is positioned as a universal and natural state.

⁷²⁸ Ina Rae Hark, ‘Fear of Flying: Yuppie critique and the buddy-road movie in the 1980s,’ p. 224

⁷²⁹ Mark Simpson, ‘The Straight Men of Comedy,’ in *Because I Tell A Joke Or Two: Comedy, Politics and Social Difference*, 1998, p. 139

John Candy in *Uncle Buck*

Uncle Buck managed to synthesise the appeal of John Candy's comic persona with scenarios from situation comedy. The *Chicago Tribune's* Dave Kehr suggested that John Hughes' screenplay and direction enabled Candy to give an endearing but amusing performance:

John Hughes' new film offers him a real showcase role, as a big, sloppy, fun-loving bachelor... [Hughes] has built the kind of vehicle movie that so effectively and unassumingly served the comic stars of the past, from Chaplin to Jerry Lewis, and largely left the driving to his lead performer.⁷³⁰

The movie focuses on the exploits of Buck Russell (Candy), a loveable but lazy bum who has to babysit his nephew and two nieces in suburban Chicago. As *Variety's* review noted, "[The] audience knows immediately that the clash will lead to sitcom humour as well as sentimentality."⁷³¹ The movie also included a subplot concerning Buck's adolescent niece, Tia, and her relationship with Bug, a pretentious and lust-driven high school senior. As Chris Willman observed in the *Los Angeles Times*, John Hughes "devised a plot with which to fuse his two genres of choice: the clashing-family members comedy and the tortured-teen pic."⁷³² In *Uncle Buck* the tension between the structuring narrative, which causes Buck to adopt a patriarchal role, and the film's deployment of Candy's comic persona has a significant impact on the tone and ideological nature of the comedy.

In *Uncle Buck*, much of the humour concerns Buck's unruly behaviour, which offends middle-class sensibilities. One of the most prominent running gags in the movie concerns the trail of smoke that follows Buck's battered, old car and the vehicle's tendency to backfire regularly. In fact, much of the humour in the film concerns the various emissions that appear to emanate from Buck. As well as signalling his slovenly habits, Buck's cigar smoking also prompts various pieces of comic business. For example, whilst walking down the hallway at Maisie's school, Buck suddenly realises that he is not supposed to be smoking and has to hold the smoke in before dashing into a nearby toilet. He then decides

⁷³⁰ Dave Kehr, "John Candy Is Back In A Role Just His Size," *Chicago Tribune*, 16 August 1989, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-08-16/features/8901050071_1_john-hughes-jerry-lewis-particles.

⁷³¹ "Uncle Buck," *Variety*, 16-22 August 1989, 21.

⁷³² Chris Willman, "Uncle Buck John Hughes' Valentine to Teenhood," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 August 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-16/entertainment/ca-376_1_uncle-buck.

that he needs to urinate and, because the stalls are all occupied, decides to use a urinal designed for children. The visual gag that follows relies on the absurdity of Candy, a large, 6' 2" tall man, attempting to square up to a tiny urinal that is just a few inches off the ground. At various points in the film, Buck seems unable to control his speech. In order to establish the character's uncouthness, Buck's first conversation with his sister-in-law includes reference to his bowel movements. "I've been bound up lately. It's driving me crazy. I've been eating a lot of cheese for some reason..." he jabbers. Later, in a meeting with the vice-principal of his niece's elementary school, Buck is unable to distract himself from the prominent blemish on the teacher's face and accidentally introduces himself as, "Buck Melanoma, Moley Russell's wart." Buck's lack of restraint also characterises his relationship with food. His nephew and nieces first encounter him in the kitchen, assembling breakfast while singing to the radio. This scene establishes his haphazard but fun-loving approach to life. In another sequence, Buck prepares enormous pancakes for Miles' birthday breakfast. The visual gag involves Buck flipping a pancake with a snow shovel. Another piece of comic business involves Buck lies on the couch eating sugary cereal out of the box, while watching a workout show, and his use of a handheld vacuum cleaner to suck the crumbs off his sweater. To some extent, then, Buck is a version of the carnivalesque figure that Candy played in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*.

While many of the comic incidents in *Uncle Buck* are loosely linked, what provides the narrative drive is the conflict between Buck and Tia. In her analysis of *Uncle Buck*, Elizabeth G. Traube argues that, "What the plot identifies as Buck's adversary is neither bourgeois respectability nor adult authority in any form but rather the sexual promiscuity of over-privileged, under-regulated teenagers"⁷³³ In his interactions with the teenagers, Buck often asserts his patriarchal authority through "jokes" that are thinly-veiled threats towards Bug. When the youth mockingly asks him, "You ever hear of a tune up?", Buck mimics his laughter and says, "You ever hear of a ritual killing?... You gnaw on her face like that in public again and you'll be one." In another scene, Buck cheerily provides Bug with an explanation of why he carries a hatchet ("Not to kill. Just to maim...") and then produces the axe from the trunk of his car. Both of these scenes are comic in tone, but Buck's aggression toward the teenage boy is barely hidden. Upon finding Bug trying to have sex with another teenage girl, Buck binds Bug's body up with duct tape and puts him in the

⁷³³ Elizabeth G. Traube, *Dreaming Identities: Class, Gender, and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 149.

trunk of his car. Buck and Tia then torment Bug into making an apology by wielding a power drill and joking that Buck is “an amateur dentist.” In response to the teenager’s subsequent threats to sue him, Buck hits a golf ball at the boy’s head. Buck’s robust response to Bug’s actions is one of a number of scenes that show Buck’s policing of the boundaries of childhood. Earlier in the film, Buck punches a clown that turns up for his nephew’s birthday party drunk. When Maisie’s vice-principal criticises the six-year-old for being a “dreamer,” he growls, “You so much as scowl at my niece or any other kid in this school and I hear about it, I’m coming looking for you.” As he leaves, he flicks a quarter at her, suggesting that she can “go downtown have a rat gnaw that thing off your face.” In all of these scenes, *Uncle Buck* clearly encourages the audience to side with Buck’s direct approach to protecting the children’s innocence. The ambivalence that underpins these gags suggests that the comedian is not always a progressive, libratory force.

National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation

In her review for the *New York Times* Janet Maslin stated that *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation* “makes no pretense at being anything other than a disjointed collection of running gags.”⁷³⁴ She added that, “if it weren’t for a calendar that marks the approach of Christmas Day, the film would have no forward momentum at all.”⁷³⁵ Similarly, *Variety* observed that the “script relies on simple situational humour.”⁷³⁶ *Christmas Vacation* relies heavily on slapstick and broad visual comedy. For instance, in a comic incident reminiscent of a scene involving a bat in *The Great Outdoors*, a live squirrel jumps out of the Christmas tree. The chase sequence that ensues shows the family running around the house to avoid the squirrel, whilst Snots the dog pursues the critter. In another gag, the Christmas tree lights electrocute the grandmother’s cat. *Screen International*’s reviewers felt that the lack of plot was not necessarily detrimental. “The story, gift paper thin, is at its best when it disappears completely and lets Chases’ haplessness take over,” they stated.⁷³⁷ In fact, the general consensus among reviewers was that the film was an excellent vehicle for Chase’s talents. “Chase is in peak form,” stated *Variety*, “his mugging and slapstick offset by his droll

⁷³⁴ Janet Maslin, “On Vacation Once Again,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1989, C12.

⁷³⁵ Maslin, “On Vacation Once Again.”

⁷³⁶ “*National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*,” *Variety*, 8 December 1989, 32.

⁷³⁷ Patricia Hanson & Steve Hanson, “*National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*,” *Screen International*, 9 December 1989, 43.

persona and perfect timing.”⁷³⁸ The film includes numerous moments of broad slapstick performed by Chase (or his stunt double). In *Christmas Vacation* Clark demonstrates a lack of physical and emotional control from the very start of the film. Chevy Chase’s facial expressions are much more exaggerated and his physical movements less constrained. From the outset, the character’s behaviour is erratic and his attitude toward other people and adverse situations is much less tolerant. In a scene that introduces the Griswold’s suburban neighborhood, he wields a chainsaw and retorts, “bend over and I’ll show you,” in response to a comment from his yuppie neighbours.

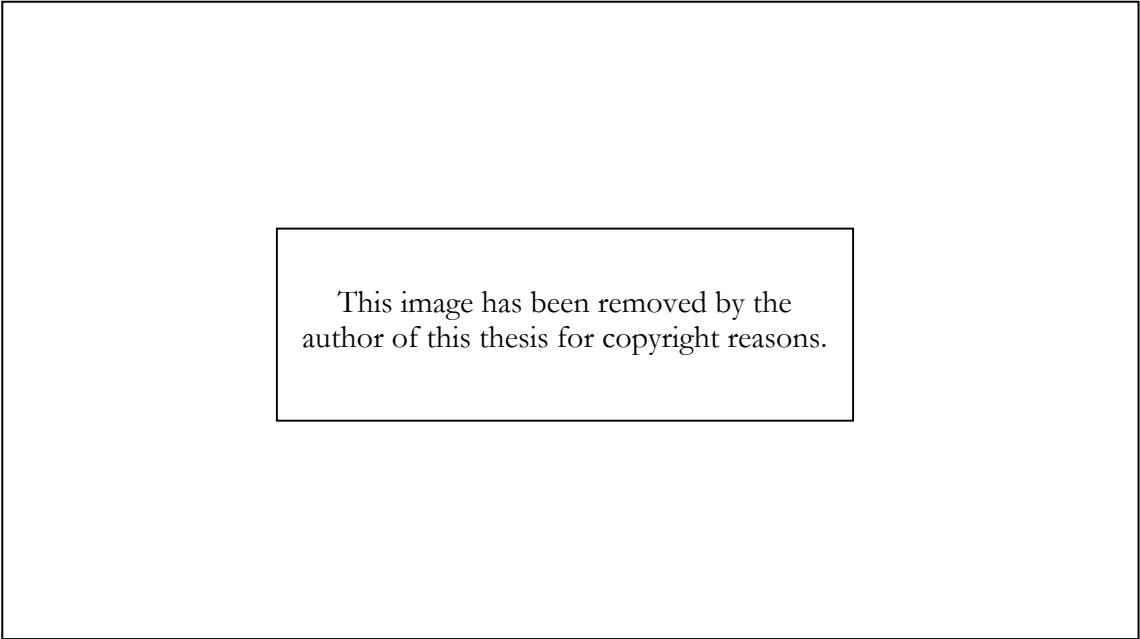
The family dynamics in *Christmas Vacation* are much more sitcom-like than in the original *Vacation*. Clark’s children are generally sympathetic towards their father and, while still attractive, Beverly D’Angelo’s character has become much less sexualized and her clothing more conservative. Unlike the first *Vacation*, the movie does not refer to the Griswolds’ sex life. In a scene where they are both in bed, they are reading magazines and the joke is that Clark is unable to flick the pages because he has tree-sap on his hands. Later in the film, when Audrey complains about having to share a bed with her brother, Ellen comments, “Well, I have to share with your father.” Given that the Griswold children are still the same age as in the original *Vacation*, the absence of sexuality in *Christmas Vacation* seems to be less a result of the parents’ advancing years and more an indication of the film’s attempts to appeal to a family audience. Admittedly, Clark’s inability to control his lust is briefly referenced in a scene at a department store, when he tells an attractive female store clerk that “it’s a bit nippy out.” In a later scene, he fantasises about the women and she strips for him, although strategic camera angles and editing mean that more is left to the imagination. At no point, however, does a woman pose an actual threat to the Griswold’s marriage.

Compared to the first *Vacation* movie, where the humour concerning Cousin Eddie’s family was perhaps the most controversial part of the movie, in *Christmas Vacation* the character is an almost loveable caricature. Rita Kempley of *The Washington Post* described the character as “hillbilly burlesque.”⁷³⁹ Most of the jokes relating to Eddie are still derived from white trash stereotypes, such as his dubious fashion sense and his rusting trailer. Indeed, one of

⁷³⁸ “*National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*,” *Variety*.

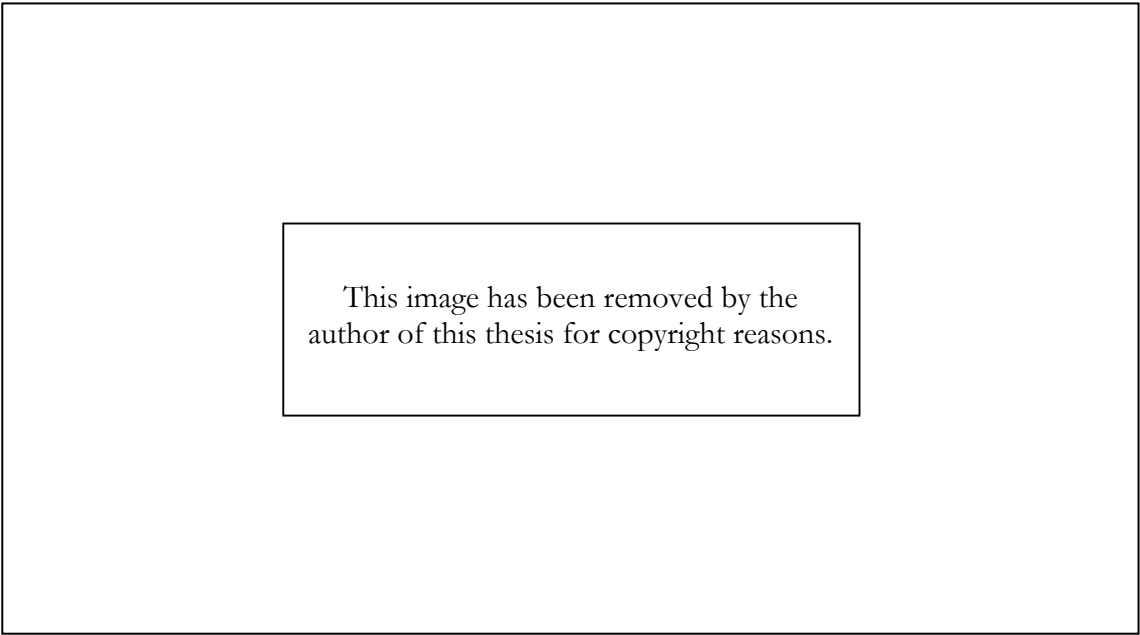
⁷³⁹ Rita Kempley, “*National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*,” *The Washington Post*, 1 December 1989, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/nationallampoonschristmasvacation.htm>.

the most memorable visual gags in the film involves Eddie drinking a beer and emptying his RV's chemical toilet into a storm drain, whilst clad in a bathrobe and trapper hat. Compared to the scenes involving Eddie in the first *Vacation* movie, there is less of an attempt to make the audience feel uncomfortable, and the characters' attitudes towards him are less hostile. Instead, the majority of aggression in the movie is directed at the Griswold's childless, yuppie neighbours, Todd (Nicholas Guest) and Margot (Julia Louis-Dreyfus). The movie uses comedy to work through the suppressed anxieties that these characters provoke. The characters' costumes were clearly designed to generate laughter by parodying the fashions worn by '80s yuppies. The unintended consequences that Clark's various mishaps have for the two yuppies becomes a running gag throughout the film. Their reactions to scenarios such as the destruction of their stereo system and being blinded by the Griswold's Christmas lights are a play on yuppie angst. As childless characters, their ostentatious consumption of consumer goods provides an outward manifestation of their dubious priorities and moral vacuity. The numerous misfortunes that befall Todd and Margot arguably serve to reinforce the "correctness" of Clark's focus on his family.



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 55 – Cousin Eddie, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 56 – Todd and Margot, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*

The movie offsets much of its broad, sometimes crude, humour with a substantial dose of sentimentality. On several occasions during *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, Clark proclaims they are going to have a “fun, old-fashioned family Christmas.” When Clark attempts to access the attic to hide Christmas presents, he is hit in the face with the attic steps. The following sequence proceeds to mix slapstick and broad visual humour with more sentimental elements. He is hit several times in the face by planks of wood and falls partway through the ceiling of one of the rooms below. Then, finding himself trapped in the attic, he puts on a woman's fur, gloves and hat, in order to keep warm. To pass the time, he sits watching old home movies. A warm strings score accompanies shots of him crying and laughing at a video of “Xmas 1955.” An unexpected slapstick gag undercuts the sentimental moment, as Clark falls through the attic hatch. The movie also shifts to a more sincere sentimental tone when Clark has a heart-to-heart with his father and then recites Clement Clark Moore's “Twas the Night Before Christmas.” In these scenes, the notion of family is tied to a nostalgic past that cannot be recaptured, in spite of Clark's best efforts. The ending of *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* is not dissimilar to that of the first *Vacation* movie. The film's conclusion combines a large number of visual gags and slapstick moments, including a visit from the local SWAT team, with a substantial dose of sentiment. After Clark's boss sees the error of his ways, the family unite outside the Griswold house and join together singing “The Star Spangled Banner” and Christmas Carols. Although it seems sudden and somewhat absurd, conventions of Christmas movie mean that the silly but heart-warming ending of *Christmas Vacation* meets audience expectations.

Conclusions

National Lampoon's Vacation, which was based on a screenplay by Hughes, features more anarchic and absurd humour than Hughes' later films. An unusual intervention within the road movie genre, *Vacation* is one of only a handful of American movies that show a whole nuclear family undertaking a road trip together. Consistent with its association with the company responsible for *Animal House*, the movie also includes a greater quantity of crude and potentially controversial humour. *Vacation* plays off Chase's WASP persona and allows the comedian to display his talent for slapstick and physical performance. However, various narrative devices work to contain Clark Griswold's anti-social urges. Although Clark is an

ridiculous father-figure, the white, middle-class Griswold family are rarely the butt of the joke, nor are they subjected to a critique. The film displaces anxieties about the family onto Cousin Eddie and his family who are stereotypical “white trash” hicks. The sequence in the “ghetto” ridicules Clark’s whiteness and middle-class identity but simultaneously asserts his superiority through reliance on crude stereotypes of African-Americans. The film’s conclusion, which shows Clark regain his sanity and narrowly avoid arrest, tries to bring to an end the comedian’s lawless and hysterical behaviour. However, the resolution feels undermotivated and is therefore unstable.

Although *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* exploits and develops Martin’s and Candy’s personas, it contains their performances within a structured and bounded narrative. The conventions of screwball comedy give the film a logical narrative structure and help the film to resolve any the problems it presents through a happy ending of wish-fulfillment. Roger Ebert proclaimed the movie “a screwball comedy with a heart” and another reviewer drew parallels with Preston Sturges’ work.⁷⁴⁰ Although the generic framework provides structure for the events in the narrative, it allows a certain level of freedom for the performers. As Hal Hines observed in his *Washington Times* review, “Hughes relies on a tried and true comic approach: He puts his actors in terrible situations and lets them react... And with performers like Martin and Candy, this begins to resemble something like genius.”⁷⁴¹ In *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* both Neal and Del learn from their experiences and interactions with each other. Del’s carnivalesque impulses help Neal, the neurotic yuppie, to undergo a process of personal development. However, as Ina Rae Hark points out, its critique is “not yuppie workaholicism or acquisitiveness but yuppie self-enclosure in a sense of entitlement, refinement and obsession with style, connoisseurship and fitness.”⁷⁴² In fact, the film constantly reasserts the importance of the affluent nuclear family. Moreover, the representations of Owen and other “white trash” characters reinforce the desirability of Neal and Del’s class backgrounds.

⁷⁴⁰ Roger Ebert, “Martin and Candy Take the High Road in Hughes’ Comedy,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 25 November 1987, 35; Jack Mathews, [Los Angeles Times service], “Hughes may have arrived with *Planes*,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 18 December 1987, 3D

⁷⁴¹ Hal Hinson, “*Planes, Trains and Automobiles*,” *The Washington Post*, November 25, 1987., http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/planestrainsandautomobilesrhinson_a0c920.htm

⁷⁴² Ina Rae Hark, “Fear of Flying: Yuppie critique and the buddy-road movie in the 1980s,” in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), 216.

Uncle Buck has a looser structure than *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*. Much of the film's humour derives from pieces of comic business that display Candy's body and physicality as a performer. *Uncle Buck* demonstrates that comedian performance is not necessarily anarchic or liberatory. Thanks to the film's framing narrative, which seeks to reassert patriarchal authority, a number of gags in the film are "co-opted" for conservative ends. The film condemns the yuppie parents' for their negligence towards their children, particularly their teenage daughter, and suggests that Buck's more hands-on approach to child-rearing is a preferable state of affairs. *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* revisits this antipathy towards yuppies, albeit in a more comical way. A great deal of humour is generated by Clark's disruption of the lives of Todd and Margot, who are ridiculous caricatures of yuppie acquisitiveness and self-obsession. In many respects, *Christmas Vacation* signposts John Hughes' reorientation toward the family audience at the end of the 1980s. The film's combination of broad slapstick humour, which makes extensive use of Chevy Chase's comic persona, and more sentimental moments became a defining characteristic of John Hughes' "signature product" in the following decade.

Chapter Six

Family Films, Comedy and Ideology

In his *Chicago Sun-Times* review of *Home Alone 2*, Roger Ebert pondered whether the movie was acceptable viewing for a family audience:

Is this a children's movie? I confess I do not know. Millions of kids will go to see it. There used to be movies where it was bad for little kids to hurt grown-ups. Now Kevin bounces bricks off their skulls from the rooftops, and everybody laughs. The question isn't whether the movie will scare the children in the audience. It's whether the adults will be able to peek between their fingers.⁷⁴³

Sharing Ebert's perspective, many critics acknowledged that adults would probably be more concerned than the children in the audience about the film's comic violence.⁷⁴⁴ In an interview conducted to promote *Dennis the Menace*, Hughes stated, "I'm not gonna ask you to bring your kids to see my movie if I wouldn't bring my kids. If it isn't appropriate for mine, it certainly isn't going to be appropriate for yours."⁷⁴⁵ Running through these discussions was a concern about what children should be watching as opposed to what they enjoy. As Roger Ebert noted, adults were more likely to be shocked and concerned by the violence in Hughes' films than the children in the audience. Such anxieties are closely bound to ideas of childhood and innocence. While the slapstick elements proved to be a divisive aspect of Hughes' 1990s films, the debate relating to whether the films catered to children's or adults' tastes and whether they were suitable for children, draws attention to the difficulties encountered when trying to establish the boundaries to the "family film."

The question of what constitutes a "family film" runs through the majority of scholarship concerning family-oriented movies. John Hughes family films were defined as such through their positioning within the market by the entertainment industry and by the mainstream press. However, the movies designated as family films by the industry and

⁷⁴³ Roger Ebert, "Alone Again, Violently," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 20 November 1992, 43.

⁷⁴⁴ See, for example: Janet Maslin, "Alone Again: Holiday Mischief in Manhattan," *New York Times*, 20 November 1992, C1; Owen Gleiberman, "Home Alone 2: Lost In New York," *Entertainment Weekly*, 27 November 1992, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,312494,00.html>.

⁷⁴⁵ "Interview With John Hughes," *Dennis the Menace*, DVD, Region 1.

audiences demonstrate a relatively high degree of textual diversity. Noel Brown, author of the first book-length study of the family film, argues that “the family film sits awkwardly in relation to genre.”⁷⁴⁶ He asserts that the lack of a consistent set of semantic features means that scholarly approaches to genre do not provide an adequate framework for conceptualising the family film.⁷⁴⁷ As Robert C. Allen points out, “the family film has not been constituted as a genre in the traditional sense, since it has included realistic comedies, adventure fantasies, animated films, as well as live action/animation hybrids.”⁷⁴⁸ Similarly, Peter Kramer notes the “diversity” present in family films and observes that “they do not have much in common and therefore resist the systematic analysis of iconography, narrative patterns and thematic concerns underpinning much of genre studies.”⁷⁴⁹ Drawing on Tino Balio’s work, Kramer states a preference for the term “production trend” rather than “genre”, when discussing the family film because “production trends can be identified by both textual features (such as story, iconography and forms of spectacle) and extra textual features (such as target audience, release pattern, budget, cultural status and key personnel.”⁷⁵⁰ In spite of these conceptual challenges, as Brown, Allen and Kramer note, consistencies can be observed between family films produced in similar contexts. Brown, for example, views “the Hollywood family film as a reasonably coherent body of films, typically sharing specific ideological overtones, emotive aspects and commercial intent.”⁷⁵¹ These similarities between texts relate to both the economic and cultural motivations that underpin Hollywood’s production of family entertainment.

There is a strong consensus that the notional target audience of the family film is a cross-generational audience. However, scholars have expressed differing perspectives on whether the family film is distinct from the children’s film. Robert C. Allen argues that the 1990s family film does *not* “as the term had suggested in the 1960s and 1970s... signify films addressed exclusively at children.”⁷⁵² In contrast, Heather Addison argues that the “1990s

⁷⁴⁶ Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film*, 11.

⁷⁴⁷ Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film*, 11

⁷⁴⁸ Allen, “Home Alone Together,” 114.

⁷⁴⁹ Peter Krämer, “‘The Best Disney film Disney never made’: Children’s Films and the family audience in American Cinema Since the 1960s,” in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. Steve Neale (London: BFI, 2002), 186

⁷⁵⁰ Peter Krämer, “Would You Take Your Child To See This Film? The Cultural and Social Work of the Family-Adventure Movie,” in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), 308.

⁷⁵¹ Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film*, 12.

⁷⁵² Allen, “Home Alone Together,” 114.

American family films” are not “a specific genre.” Instead, drawing on Thomas Schatz’s work on genre in the studio system, she proposes that the family film is “a broad category of films designed to appeal to children.” Throughout her essay, she conflates the “children’s film” and the “family film” and does not distinguish between Hollywood movies and other texts. In various essays on New Hollywood cinema, Peter Krämer has paid particular attention to this issue. In one chapter, he repeatedly refers to *Star Wars* and the majority of New Hollywood blockbusters as “children’s films.” However, he qualifies his description, by noting, “More precisely they are children’s films for the whole family and for teenagers too.”⁷⁵³ In another essay, he delineates between the children’s film (“films made specially for children”) and family films (“those films aimed at both children and their parents”) but notes that “there is considerable overlap between the categories.”⁷⁵⁴ Arguably, a film’s success in appealing to both adults and children determines whether it is a family film, as suggested in promotional materials, or simply a children’s film. As Lisa Leiban noted in her 1994 appraisal of the “family film” trend in the *New York Times*, “In making movies that appeal to children, parents have sometimes been ignored.”⁷⁵⁵

John Hughes’ films demonstrate that the balance between child oriented and adult oriented elements varies considerably from film to film. As Heather Addison observes, “the adult appeal of such films ranges from the slight to the substantial, but because children constitute the core audience of family films, adult material complements rather than excludes or replaces the material intended to appeal to children.” John Hughes’ family films often privilege more universal forms of humour, visual storytelling and apparently simple themes in order to retain the attention of children in the audience. In spite of the fact that, as Richard deCordova notes, “the process of representing the child audience is always overdetermined by the analyst’s frame of reference,” there is still room to consider how certain features of the film text address children.⁷⁵⁶ Peter Krämer has argued that family films offer adults two points of entry into the film’s narrative: “childish delight and absorption on the one hand, adult self-awareness and nostalgia on the other hand.”⁷⁵⁷ Phil Powrie suggests that adults watching child protagonists can occupy both of these viewing

⁷⁵³ Krämer, “It’s Aimed at Kids,” 366.

⁷⁵⁴ Krämer, “The Best Disney Film Never Made,” 186.

⁷⁵⁵ Lisa Liebman, “The Gentle Art of Creating a Family Film,” *New York Times*, 27 November 1994, H22.

⁷⁵⁶ Richard deCordova, “Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees.” *Camera Obscura* 23 (May 1990), 94.

⁷⁵⁷ Peter Krämer, “Would You Take Your Child To See This Film?”, 305.

positions simultaneously, a spectatorial position that he calls “heterospection.” This viewing strategy involves “being-adult while also being-child” which allows the adult spectator “*simultaneously* to experience innocence, and not just to view it.”⁷⁵⁸ Both Kramer and Powrie refer primarily to the individual spectator’s experience of nostalgia for their own childhood. However, nostalgia is not simply a response to the text; it is an important textual strategy within many family films.

John Hughes’ family films, particularly *Dennis the Menace* and *Miracle on 34th Street*, deploy nostalgia in an overt manner. Fredric Jameson, argues that, in addition to movies set in particular period such as *American Graffiti*, the “nostalgia film” category can encompass films which, “by reinventing the feel and shape of characteristic art objects of an older period,” attempt to “reawaken a sense of the past associated with those objects.”⁷⁵⁹ Jameson asserts that this tendency is “an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history.”⁷⁶⁰ In response, Paul Grainge cautions against reading nostalgia in recent cultural texts as merely a symptom of the zeitgeist. He argues, “if nostalgia has developed as a cultural style in contemporary American life, it cannot be explained through any single master narrative of decline, crisis, longing or loss.”⁷⁶¹ As a narrative and formal device, nostalgia is not uniform in its ideological effects. The uses to which nostalgia is put in Hughes’ movies need to be considered as part of their representational strategies, especially in relation to exploration of issues within the family. Responding to Robin Wood’s concerns about the “regressive” nature of New Hollywood cinema, the pleasures than can be gained from watching family films are not “automatic” and “mindless.”⁷⁶² Rather, these films have to work through problems within the family. The resolutions that family films offer are not necessarily stable either. For instance, Robert C. Allen argues that “moral and, by extension, ideological ambivalence is a defining feature of the family film.”⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁸ Phil Powrie, “Unfamiliar places: ‘heterospection’ and recent French films on children,” *Screen* 46, no. 3, 341-352.

⁷⁵⁹ Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on Postmodernism*, ed. Fredric Jameson (London: Verso, 1998), 10.

⁷⁶⁰ Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” 10.

⁷⁶¹ Paul Grainge, “Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes and Media Recycling,” *The Journal of American Culture* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 32.

⁷⁶² Krämer, “Would You Take Your Child To See This Film?”, 297.

⁷⁶³ Allen, “Home Alone Together,” 125.

The *Home Alone* films

Home Alone follows the comic exploits of nine-year-old Kevin McCallister (Macaulay Culkin) whose parents accidentally forget him when leaving for a family vacation in Paris. The first half of the movie depicts Kevin's enjoyment of his new found freedom. The second half shows the child's efforts to prevent two burglars, Harry (Joe Pesci) and Marv (Daniel Stern), from infiltrating his house, which is located in a very affluent neighbourhood in Chicago's North Shore and is full of expensive possessions that clearly signal the McCallisters' upper-middle-class status. All the while, Kevin's mother (Catherine O'Hara) tries desperately to return home. At fairly regular intervals, the film cuts away to scenes of Kevin's family in Paris and his mother's long journey back to Chicago. A subplot concerning Kevin's relationship with his elderly neighbour, Mr Marley, provides an additional layer of sentiment. Kevin initially believes Mr Marley is a serial killer but discovers that he is kind but lonely man who is estranged from his family. *Home Alone's* parallel narrative structure allows for adults in the audience to identify with the onscreen adults, particularly Kevin's mother. In many respects, *Home Alone* is a fantasy of child omnipotence. Despite Kevin's family's perception that he, as his sister puts it, is "little and helpless" he demonstrates that he has the skills needed to look after himself, is capable of outwitting adults and, through his advice to Mr. Marley, has emotional maturity. Rather than offering a representation of childhood based primarily adults' nostalgia for their own youth, *Home Alone* provides a more ambivalent perspective on contemporary childhood. Although Macaulay Culkin's blonde hair, pouty lips and wide-eyed expressions, as James R. Kincaid notes, evoke the image of the "adorable" child, Kevin's behaviour contradicts this impression.⁷⁶⁴ The rapid-fire dialogue at the start of *Home Alone* immediately establishes the children's precocity and disregard for parental authority. As Gary Cross observes: "the innocent are more than 'pure'. Today they are also cute and spunky."⁷⁶⁵

Home Alone 2 depicts Kevin's adventures in New York, after he accidentally boards a different plane from his family, after inserting batteries into his Talkboy cassette player. In many respects, *Home Alone 2* duplicates the narrative structure used in the first film. As Carolyn Jess-Cook observes, the sequel is "a framework within which formulas of

⁷⁶⁴ James R. Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 116.

⁷⁶⁵ Gary Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern Childhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

repetition, difference, history, nostalgia, memory and audience interactivity produce a series of dialogues and relationships between a textual predecessor and its continuation, between audience and text...⁷⁶⁶ The filmmakers were no doubt aware that a large contingent of the audience for *Home Alone 2* had close familiarity with the original movie. By the early 1990s, it was widely recognised that children liked to watch certain videos repeatedly. Marsha Kinder suggests that children's enjoyment of repeat viewings derives, in part, from the process of mastering narratives, which enables them to identify minor variations in plot.⁷⁶⁷ A significant part of *Home Alone 2*'s strategy for creating audience enjoyment was through the narrative's interplay between predictability and novelty. The film recycles numerous elements from the original *Home Alone*, particularly gags, and reworks them slightly. The sequel allows the audience to derive pleasure from their recall of their knowledge of the original film by "inviting the audience to engage and predict the narrative in new (yet highly familiar contexts)."⁷⁶⁸ While the narratives of *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2* are extremely similar, there are a number of subtle differences between the films, which have a noticeable impact on how the films work through the ideological issues that they present.

In *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2* the blurred boundaries between childhood and adulthood are evident in the films' depiction of consumption. As was discussed in Chapter 3, it was in John Hughes' interest to create narratives that allowed for the insertion of a wide range of consumer products, in order to generate income from placement fees. Irrespective of the motivation for such an emphasis, issues of consumption and ownership form an integral part of the narrative and character development in the *Home Alone* films. Both films place particular emphasis on Kevin as a consumer of goods and services. An integral part of his maturation is his transformation into an autonomous consumer, capable of making purchase decisions independently of his parents. Kevin's lack of maturity manifests itself when, upon discovering that he is alone, he decides to eat as much junk food as possible, in front of one of the family's many television sets. The scene includes Reddi Wip cream, Kraft Jet-Puffed Marshmallows, Hershey's chocolate syrup, and, most prominently, Frito Lay's Crunch 'Tators potato chips and Pepsi soda. The problem is apparently not junk food per se but his excessive, and therefore inappropriate, consumption of these (clearly

⁷⁶⁶ Carolyn Jess-Cook, *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), vi.

⁷⁶⁷ Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 32–34.

⁷⁶⁸ Jess-Cook, *Film Sequels*, 10.

branded) products. Kevin's acceptance of his responsibilities coincides with his transformation into a more discerning consumer. The scenes that follow the boy's embrace of his new role as "man of the house", feature an array of branded domestic products, targeted primarily at relatively middle-class consumers. A whole scene is dedicated to Kevin grocery shopping at the supermarket, allowing for numerous shots of branded goods. As a piece of comic dialogue takes place between Kevin and the check-out girl, a close-up of the conveyor belt shows his apparently sensible purchases, including a Kraft Macaroni and Cheese dinner, Snuggle dryer sheets, a loaf of Wonder bread and Quilted Northern toilet paper. The boy's presentation of a coupon, for a discount on Tropicana orange juice, reinforces that his attitude toward consumption has become more adult-like and responsible. Kevin soon sets about using his purchases to complete chores around the house, for instance by using Tide detergent when doing the laundry.

The consumption depicted in *Home Alone 2* is much more upmarket than in the original film and seems to be motivated by Kevin's apparently expensive tastes. Finding himself in New York City and in possession of his father's Visa credit card and a large quantity of cash, he sets about enjoying his own vacation. He visits several major tourist attractions, including the Radio City Music Hall and World Trade Centre, which he photographs using a Polaroid camera. When Kevin checks into a suite at the Plaza Hotel, after using his Talkboy cassette player to make a reservation over the phone, his responses to the room mimic adult observations, but he is most excited by the candy-stocked closet and large television. During his stay at the hotel, he practices "cannonballs" in the hotel pool, has a waiter serve ice cream to him in bed, and hires a stretch limosine. While cruising around Manhattan in the limo, he watches television, eats pizza and drinks Coca-Cola out of a champagne glass. Evidently, in *Home Alone 2* Kevin's self-indulgence is more excessive and of longer duration than the first movie, an adjustment that can partially be attributed to the filmmakers' decision to exaggerate everything in the sequel. However, the motivation for his choices is somewhat more complex than in the earlier film. Kevin's mischief in *Home Alone*, which consists of riding a sled through the house, jumping on the beds and eating junk food, seems to be prompted by his childish instinct for fun and taps into desires shared by many children. In *Home Alone 2*, Kevin's choices are presented as a child's fantasies but are clearly determined by his upper-middle-class background and awareness of the cultural capital associated with certain goods, services and leisure activities. Kevin is able to commit credit card fraud because he uses his understanding of the rules and rituals

of the adult world to manipulate the hotel staff. As Kevin has grown older, he has become more aware of his upper-middle-class privilege but apparently less concerned with his responsibilities.

In *Home Alone*, Kevin's purchase of domestic products and entry into the world of autonomous consumption was tied to his acceptance of learnt adult responsibility, and therefore acted as a corrective for his immature behaviour. Consistent with the film's relatively ambivalent view of childhood, the meaning of consumption in *Home Alone 2* is fairly ambiguous. In *Home Alone 2* Kevin does not have to modify his behaviour and embrace a more responsible attitude to consumption, consistent with the protestant work ethic. Instead, he is allowed to flaunt his class status and compensates for his excessive consumption through various ostensibly philanthropic gestures. During his spending spree, Kevin visits Duncan's Toy Chest, a toy shop owned by Mr Duncan (Eddie Bracken) a kindly old man whose "loving smiles prove that capitalism cares and the status quo is just."⁷⁶⁹ While paying for Monster Sap soap (available through Tiger Toys), a map and a Swiss Army knife, Kevin donates \$20 to Mr Duncan's charity appeal. He explains, "I'll probably spend it on stuff that'll rot my teeth or my mind." Mr Duncan rewards Kevin's "generosity" by allowing the boy to pick an ornament from the Christmas tree. While the film celebrates Kevin's apparently generous nature, he is still spending his father's money and, as Francis Ostrower observes, "philanthropy is... a mark of privilege and high social status."⁷⁷⁰ Kevin's belief in the importance of philanthropy apparently motivates him to prevent the burglars from stealing the charity money. The scenes that follow allow the boy to assert his moral and social superiority in a more aggressive manner.

The narrative climax of *Home Alone* shows the Wet Bandits falling foul of the booby traps that Kevin has rigged to defend his large suburban home. A sequence shows the boy gathering items such as glass Christmas decorations, paint cans, an iron, and Micromachines in order to turn his house into a fortress. As Peter Krämer notes, slapstick violence can "realize the destructive potential of the everyday world", revealing "the hidden power of objects as well as the latent aggressions of people" and emphasising "the

⁷⁶⁹ Joe Kincheloe, "Home Alone and Bad to the Bone: The Advent of a Postmodern Childhood," in *Kinderculture*, ed. Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe, (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 45.

⁷⁷⁰ Francis Ostrower, *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 36.

vulnerability of the human body and the fragility of the social order.”⁷⁷¹ While certain parents and commentators criticised the “violence” in *Home Alone*, various features of the film’s climax prevent the movie from becoming “a second-grader’s version of *Straw Dogs*.”⁷⁷² Before the burglars siege on the house commences, Kevin pumps his BB rifle and says to the camera, “This is it. Don’t get scared now.” This moment reinforces Kevin’s omnipotence and attempts to allay the fears of the children in the audience by addressing them directly. The extended slapstick sequence that follows is a tightly choreographed series of sight gags and stunts, clearly designed to elicit laughter. The reactions of Harry and Marv are crucial in establishing the cartoon-like tone of the sequence. The burglar’s register their pain in comically excessive fashion, by yelling and doubling up in pain, but then quickly recover. The editing of the final sequence also helps to pace the stunts so that the audience and, by implication, the burglars have moments of respite from the intense action. John William’s score helps to unify this sequence and helps to maintain a light-hearted tone. While non-diegetic, cartoon-like sound effects are not used, certain sounds on the Foley track are amplified so that various stages of each stunt are emphasised, particularly any moments of impact on the characters’ bodies. The movement of the burglar’s bodies during their pratfalls is extremely exaggerated. They do not simply fall down; they fly backwards through the air in an extremely acrobatic fashion and then hit the deck with a loud “thunk”.

Although the slapstick climax of *Home Alone 2* is comic in tone and the gags cartoon-like in their execution, aesthetic differences and Kevin’s almost sadistic enjoyment of his revenge on the burglars draw greater attention to the aggression that underscores the action. Whereas Kevin defends his home from invasion by the burglars in the original *Home Alone*, in the second film he lures them to a house that he has rigged with booby traps. The camerawork, editing, musical score and actors’ performances are similar to the original movie. Many of the gags are more spectacular than in the first *Home Alone*, but they are also more implausible. As the movie’s stunt coordinator, Freddie Hice noted in a newspaper interview, “This time we did everything over the top. We exaggerated everything we’ve

⁷⁷¹ Peter Krämer, “Clean, dependable slapstick: Comic Violence and the Emergence of Classical Hollywood Cinema” in *Violence and American Cinema*, ed. J. David Slocum (New York: Routledge, 2001), 107.

⁷⁷² Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power*, 218.

ever done.”⁷⁷³ Typically, this level of exaggeration makes the gags much even more like live-action cartoons. For instance, when Marv is electrocuted after he touches a faucet that Kevin has hooked up to an electric generator, the burglar is briefly transformed into a skeleton as he screams and the sparks fly off him. Once the electrocution is over, Marv judders comically and then collapses, his hair standing on end. However, there are formal differences between *Home Alone 2* and its predecessor that create a more sinister atmosphere. In contrast to the warm, inviting family home of the first movie, the house is an empty brownstone that Kevin’s uncle is renovating. The subdued colour palette consists of browns, greys and blacks and the use of muted, sometimes low-key, lighting is evocative of an aesthetic more readily associated with horror movies than the family film. Crucially, the change in setting means that Kevin’s actions no longer constitute self-defense and defense of property, which, in the eyes of many Americans, could qualify as legitimate use of force. In *Home Alone 2*, the boy’s vigilante actions seem to be motivated by revenge for the burglars’ theft of the children’s charity money and for their death threats against him. Compared to the first *Home Alone*, in which the majority of booby traps are rigged to work unmanned, in the sequel Kevin is more directly involved in inflicting pain on the burglars. He throws four bricks at Marv’s head from the top of the building; he turns on a generator to electrocute Marv; he sets a rope dipped in kerosene alight while the burglars are climbing down it. In all of these instances, close-up shots record Kevin’s gleeful satisfaction at having bested his adversaries.

Much of the humour in *Home Alone* derives from the child’s ability to make a fool of adults, inverting real-life expectations of the scenarios presented on screen. As Robert R. Shandley observes in relation to violence in *Looney Tunes*, “the humour derives from the inversion of the relationship in which the would-be predator becomes the prey.”⁷⁷⁴ For many adults in the audience, their knowledge of Joe Pesci’s onscreen persona, exemplified by his role as Tommy DeVito in *Goodfellas* (which was released just two months before *Home Alone*), will certainly have added to this comic effect. The ideological significance of the comedy in the *Home Alone* films is relatively uncertain, however. Steve Shaviro suggests that:

Like all forms of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, slapstick is deeply ambiguous: it is potentially subversive, but at the same time easily recuperable by power... A kind

⁷⁷³ William Grimes, “*Home Alone 2*: Sequel Success? Or Pow! Splat!,” *New York Times*, 15 November 1992, H20.

⁷⁷⁴ Robert R. Shandley, *Hogan’s Heroes* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 43.

of comic catharsis prevents social tensions from accumulating to a dangerous level; a symbolic challenge to the ruling values helps to defuse a real one.⁷⁷⁵

The humour created by Kevin's actions towards the burglars is not solely concerned with the incongruity of a pre-teen boy defeating two adult men. Given Kevin's background and the motivations behind his actions, his humiliation of Harry and Marv also evokes a sense of middle-class superiority. The movie's slapstick climax makes it abundantly clear that the working-class burglars are the enemy, deserving of the pain inflicted on their bodies. Joe Kincheloe argues that "class- and ethnic-specific traits set Marv and Harry apart to such a degree that the audience can unambiguously enjoy their torture at the hands of Kevin."⁷⁷⁶

Seemingly anticipating criticisms of the films' slapstick violence, both *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2* include sequences that negotiate the issue of child-appropriate movie content. In an early scene in *Home Alone*, Kevin settles down with a bowl of junk food to watch *Angels With Filthy Souls*, a black and white gangster movie, which would presumably be off-limits if his parents were home. Similarly, in *Home Alone 2*, while staying at the Plaza, Kevin decides to watch *Angels With Even Filthier Souls*. Both of these film sequences were made especially for the *Home Alone* films. Clearly, the films' titles and content reference the gangster movies of the 1930s, which inspired various moral panics about the impact of cinema on impressionable young minds.⁷⁷⁷ In *Angels With Filthy Souls*, which appears in the first *Home Alone*, a gangster named Johnny murders an accomplice called Snakes with a Tommy gun. On his first viewing, Kevin is disturbed by the film and cries out for his mom. However, he later uses the video to avoid arousing the pizza delivery boy's suspicion and fool the burglars, by pausing and fast-forwarding the tape to give the illusion that an actual argument is taking place. The *Angels With Even Filthier Souls* sequence is a rehash of the scene from *Angels With Filthy Souls* but features a female character and refers to "smooching", implying that the film depicts sexuality as well as violence. The murder is also more vicious than in the original film. However, Kevin draws on his knowledge of the movie and offers a commentary on the scene. When the action becomes slightly too intense, he covers his eyes. The filmmakers' inclusion of these scenes in the *Home Alone* movies seems to imply that, while parents may feel that movie's content is unsuitable for

⁷⁷⁵ Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 109.

⁷⁷⁶ Kincheloe, "Home Alone and Bad to the Bone," 48.

⁷⁷⁷ See, for example: John Springhall, "Censoring Hollywood: Youth, moral panic and crime/gangster movies of the 1930s," *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 3 (Winter 1998), 135–154.

children, savvy nineties kids are not only able to tolerate violence and (some) sex, they are also capable of engaging knowingly and somewhat critically with media texts. In addition, the *Angels With Filthy Souls* sequence seems to suggest that children's familiarity with film conventions enables them to tolerate increased violence in sequels. Through the use of fake black and white gangster films, the makers of the *Home Alone* films are able to make an oblique comment about the impact of media violence on children, which they could disavow if necessary.

Both *Home Alone* films conclude with the nuclear family reunited. In *Home Alone*, following her long quest home, Kevin's mother apologizes to her son for accidentally abandoning him. Throughout the film, she bears the guilt and responsibility for leaving her son at home. Her travails turn out to have been unnecessary as the family pile in through the front door moments after she arrives. In this context, the mother's journey seems to function as a display of maternal penitence and is consistent with Molly Haskell's observation that Hollywood narratives go to great pains to emphasise the sacrifices that women make for their offspring, driven by feelings of guilt about not wanting children.⁷⁷⁸ Once his family arrive, Kevin is suddenly transformed back into the child from the start of the movie. He has worked through his rebellious urges and released the anger that he feels towards his family, and is now willing to reassume his role as the youngest child. *Home Alone* concludes with Kevin watching his neighbour Mr Marley's reunion with his family, which provides further affirmation of the film's message of family unity. Robert C. Allen argues that the film's ending is unstable, however, because "despite the Capraesque allusions and the restoration of the nuclear family... these ideological alliances are undermined by the lesson Kevin seems to have learned."⁷⁷⁹ He explains, "While the film appears to maintain that we all need and want families, it also shows us that Kevin does not need his."⁷⁸⁰

Curly Sue

In *Curly Sue*, Bill acts as guardian to Sue who is the child of a woman with whom he had a one night stand, although it remains ambiguous as to whether he is her biological father.

⁷⁷⁸ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), 163–170.

⁷⁷⁹ Allen, "Home Alone together", 126

⁷⁸⁰ Allen, "Home Alone together", 127

He and Sue are travelling confidence tricksters who scam yuppies into buying them food. The film starts with broadly comic scenes of Bill and Sue's various schemes to scrounge dinner after they arrive in Chicago. These early scenes make liberal use of physical comedy and sight gags. Although *Curly Sue*'s narrative premise is similar to that of *Paper Moon* (1973), Bill and Sue's motivations and desires diverge considerably from those of Moses and Addie. Bill and Sue seem to have a clearer sense of morality, apparently only cheating wealthy individuals and high-end restaurants in order to survive, rather than preying on vulnerable people to make cash. Whereas *Paper Moon* suggests that Moses and Addie have little interest in settling down and concludes with the pair setting out on the road for a new adventure, *Curly Sue* grounds the travelling duo and works to integrate them into society. The film quickly turns into a romantic comedy, in which Sue acts as a catalyst for the adult male's transformation and for the couple's unification. This narrative strategy is reminiscent of several Shirley Temple films, such as *Our Little Girl* (1935) and *Little Miss Broadway* (1938). As Gaylyn Studlar observes, during the Great Depression, Temple's films reassured audiences that "masculinity could be made devotedly paternal and irrevocably domesticated at a time when the ties between men and their families were particularly fragile and the disintegration of families was commonplace."⁷⁸¹ Similarly, John Hughes' film uses the creation of a reconstituted nuclear family to address issues of poverty and the apparent breakdown of traditional American values during the early 1990s.

In *Curly Sue*, both Bill and Grey have shunned the responsibilities traditionally associated with their gender. Bill struggles to act as a provider for himself and Sue but, apparently, does not have a job through personal choice. Grey is more preoccupied with her career as a lawyer than with relationships or family. In an early scene, she pressures a woman into divorcing her husband, telling her: "If you want sympathy, you won't get it here. If you want emotion, I'm not an emotional person." Grey's obnoxious yuppie boyfriend, Walker, lacks basic manners and displays no compassion toward Sue and Bill, whom he calls "vagabonds." The "wrong partner", Walker embodies the traits that Grey must "cast aside" before she can be united in meaningful heterosexual monogamy with the right man.⁷⁸² Walker attempts to end Grey's romance with Bill by reporting them to social services. The government's intervention into Sue's situation is overwhelming negative. When Sue opens the door to the police and a social worker, a low angle shot suggests Sue's perspective and

⁷⁸¹ Gaylyn Studlar, *Precocious Charms: Stars Performing Girlhood in Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California, 2013), 63.

⁷⁸² Steve Neale, "The Big Romance of Something Wild?", 289.

makes the government officials look intimidating. The only words uttered by the social worker are “Are you Susan Dancer?” At the children’s home, Sue sits crying in the window of her crowded dormitory. Her face and the window are framed in close up, so as to suggest that she feels imprisoned. A point-of-view shot of the railroad tracks and the city emphasizes the removal of Sue’s freedom and her longing to be back on the road. Another social worker, whom Grey meets to discuss adopting Sue, wears a blank expression and talks in an emotionless monotone. This social worker tells Grey that her love for Sue is “completely irrelevant.” The change in Grey’s physical appearance reinforces her emotional awakening. At the start of the film, she wears power suits and has her hair pinned up in an immaculate but severe style. By the time Grey encounters the social worker, her long hair is down and she wears more casual clothing.

Curly Sue concludes with Grey, Bill and Sue united as a family. Grey manages to gain custody of Sue by blackmailing a city official so he will “pull some strings” at the DCFS. She then sells her share in the law firm and resigns from her partnership so that she can dedicate time to her new family. In this scene, Hughes’ screenplay makes it explicit that Grey has managed to correct her previous behaviour by embracing a maternal role. Her boss tells her that, “You got your value system all screwed up somewhere along the line.” To which she replies, “It was screwed up before.” He retorts, “You’re the last one I ever thought would go ‘quality of life’ on me.” The final comment, which frames Grey’s departure from the workplace as an empowered personal choice, seems an attempt by Hughes to insulate himself from criticisms of sexism. Grey confirms her rejection of yuppie values when she gains revenge on Walker by running him down with her car and then driving around a parking lot with him clinging to the hood of her car. The film’s attempts to heighten the audience’s response to the final unification of the family through the use of delays and by restricting the audience’s knowledge of events. A brief sequence depicts Bill working as a manual labourer and shows him looking at the railroad, but offers no indication of his state of mind. In the following scene as Sue and Grey travel home, the girl seems convinced that Bill has left. When they find an envelope on a table by the front door, it seems likely that Bill is not there and Sue starts to cry. Suspense is further built by the fact that Sue, who is illiterate, cannot read the letter. After a pause, Grey tells Sue that it says, “I’m in the living room.” The family is finally united by the hearth and, as they embrace, the strings music swells. The structure of the narrative and use of editing and

sound in these final scenes of *Curly Sue* is clearly designed to illicit a tearful emotional response.

Curly Sue reinstates the innocence of childhood by integrating Sue into an affluent heterosexual family and by making her more feminine. Michelle Ann Abate argues that, during the 1990s “pretty tomboyism” ensured that displays of femininity counteracted the active traits associated with tomboys.⁷⁸³ This representational shift ended the tomboy’s association with marginal racial and sexual identities in cinema, reclaiming her for the mainstream.⁷⁸⁴ During the first half of *Curly Sue*, Sue is a miniature adult who has “street smarts” and looks at the world from a fairly cynical perspective. Her lack of naïveté is particularly clear when she tells Bill, “You’re a man, she’s a woman – Hubba hubba,” and raises her eyebrows meaningfully, indicating her awareness of sex. Clearly, Sue possesses many tomboyish traits, but has developed these qualities in order to survive on the streets. Like many other tomboys in cinema, Sue has been abandoned by her parents and, therefore, “[does] not have the luxury of being femininely passive, delicate and naïve.”⁷⁸⁵ Like Addie in *Paper Moon*, Sue pretends to be a cute, naïve girl in order to scam adults out of money by manipulating their perceptions of childhood innocence. However, the film’s opening sequence suggests that Sue hankers after a life that will allow her to express her femininity more openly. A montage of close-up shots shows Sue’s hands as she plays with the contents of her bag, which is decorated with an assortment of ribbons, swatches of fabric and badges. Her personal treasures include spinning tops, an empty pink party popper, plastic bangles and necklaces, a scarf, sequins and a variety of small plastic toys. Towards the end of the sequence, she draws around her hand with a crayon, revealing a gaudy ring on her finger. This insight into Sue’s private world supports Grey’s claims that the girl has a right to a “proper” childhood and that ethics of Bill’s use of the child in his scams are questionable. The film suggests that she needs to be protected from the harsh reality of the streets and given an education. By the film’s conclusion, Sue is transformed from a tomboyish con artist, clad in a tank top with trousers held up by suspenders, into a regular middle-class girl who wears pantyhose to school. She loses many of her active traits, but appears happy to receive the material comforts that Grey provides for her and to

⁷⁸³ Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 221.

⁷⁸⁴ Abate, *Tomboys*, 221.

⁷⁸⁵ Abate, *Tomboys*, 197.

comply with the rules that she had previously broken. At the end of *Curly Sue*, Sue's girlhood has been reclaimed as well as her childhood.

Dennis the Menace

Dennis the Menace is based on the Hank Ketcham comic. The first half of the film is loosely organised, consisting primarily of scenes showing Dennis (Mason Gamble) playing and his interactions with his retired neighbour Mr Wilson (Walter Matthau). John Hughes suggested that this structure was designed to reflect the fact that the comic strip "was about incidents, really wonderful observations about family life and life at five years old." The introduction of Switchblade Sam in the second half of *Dennis the Menace* provides the narrative drive that leads to the film's climax. Sam's theft of Mr Wilson's coin collection acts as a catalyst for Dennis running away from home because it prompts Mr Wilson to finally lose his temper at the young boy. The vagrant's decision to kidnap Dennis then leads to a slapstick climax. While *Dennis the Menace* is ostensibly set in the present day, the movie is a nostalgic vision of "small town life". The location used in the film is an extremely affluent, predominantly white, neighbourhood in Chicago's North Shore. The movie opens with a shot of a deer grazing in the woods below the tree house. The sequence that follows includes shots of the idyllic countryside surrounding Dennis' town, a decidedly Capraesque main street and, finally, two large houses in a leafy suburban neighbourhood. While the mise-en-scène in *Dennis the Menace* includes some recognisably modern features, such as telephones, plastic toys and cars, many of the sets and costumes in the film reference a variety of historical periods. Dennis' mother's style is clearly inspired by the 1950s. She sports a bleach blonde, wavy hairstyle and often wears A-line dresses, made from fabrics associated with the period. Many of the clothes that the children wear were popular in the 1990s but hark back to the post-war era, such as Dennis' striped T-shirts and dungarees, Margaret's flouncy dresses and Joey's cowboy hats and Cub Scout uniform. The diegetic music also makes it difficult to position the film in a specific period. The Orlon's 1962 single "Don't Hang Up", although motivated by a sequence in which the Mitchells call every babysitter in town, scores a montage featuring Dennis' parents. Mr Wilson is associated with music that was popularised in the 1940s, including James Young's "Watch Know Joe" and the Glenn Miller Orchestra's "A String of Pearls". Popular music from the 1990s is noticeably absent. The overall aesthetic of *Dennis the Menace*, then, serves to create a peculiar sense of "pastness."

Consistent with its nostalgic aesthetic, *Dennis the Menace* offers a much more sentimental view of childhood than the *Home Alone* films or *Curly Sue*. The world that Dennis and his friends inhabit is an extremely utopian space, where children are free to roam and play. The children are allowed to play alone in the woods, where they use tools and paint to fix up a tree house without adult assistance. One evening, all of the kids from the neighbourhood play hide and seek in the street. Evidently, such represents contrast to the reality of many childhoods in the early 1990s. Dennis and his friends are much more innocent and naïve than the children in *Home Alone* and *Curly Sue*. Much of the more adult-oriented humour in the film concerns the children's curiosity towards the adult world and their understandings of gender and sexuality. In a conversation with Joey and Margaret, Dennis suggests that, "Men have better things to do than looking after babies." Evoking the frustrations of certain suburban housewives, Margaret replies, "Like what? Play golf and drink beer?" Dennis, whose understanding of manhood has clearly been shaped by an engagement with "boy's" popular culture, explains, "No. Having wars, driving cars, shaving, cleaning fish." The children also discuss where babies come from and arrive at the conclusion that a minister and a doctor install a baby through the woman's bellybutton. Such moments serve to reinforce the naivete of Dennis and his friends, as well as appealing to adults' enjoyment of the presentation of children's lack of knowledge of the adult world.

In *Dennis the Menace*, the Mitchell family's financial situation means that Dennis' mother has to return to work. Rather than condemning Alice Mitchell, the film suggests that economic necessity prompts her decision. Through her facial expressions, it is clear that she would rather stay at home and feels guilty. At the same time, the film suggests that Alice is extremely capable at her job. Anxieties concerning careerist women and the erosion of family values are displaced onto Alice's colleague Andrea. An archetypal yuppie, Andrea wears fashionable power suits and ostentatious gold jewellery. Her dark, pulled-back hair, arched eyebrows and severe make-up mimic the yuppie "look." Andrea's style, arguably a throwback to the 1980s, contrasts starkly with the Alice Mitchell's softer, more "feminine" appearance. She is the stereotypical career woman, competitive and dismissive of working mothers. Rather than addressing the difficulties faced by women in the workplace in a meaningful way, *Dennis the Menace* offers a utopian solution to Alice's problems. She is able to pursue her career because her company offers to set up a daycare centre at the office. This fortuitous turn of events also helps to bring about Andrea's humiliation. In the film's

final sequence, the yuppie becomes entangled in the photocopier machine after Dennis, who has been banished from the daycare space, presses the start button without permission. The copies that emerge from the machine show Andrea's face is stuck in a grotesque expression. Alice's satisfied facial expression as she registers the potential for an incident, before deciding not to intervene, encourages the adults in the audience to side with the mother and to revel in the yuppie's downfall.

Much of the first half of *Dennis the Menace* is built around freestanding comic incidents, which often culminate in a slapstick outcome. Consistent with Jerry Palmer's observations on gag structure, these gags function as "micronarratives" and are divided into a preparation stage and a subsequent culmination stage.⁷⁸⁶ In *Dennis the Menace*, many of the gags are set up by Dennis' attempts to solve a problems in what he thinks is a logical way. For example, Dennis shoots an aspirin down Mr Wilson's throat with a slingshot because he thinks Mr Wilson is sick and needs medicine. In another scene, Dennis squirts all of Mr Wilson's nasal spray over the bathroom, so he replaces it with mouthwash. He then realises the mouthwash is empty, so he fills that container with toilet cleanser. Both of these examples culminate in a visual punch line. In the former, the payoff occurs immediately as Mr Wilson sits bolt upright, starts choking and then spits the aspirin out. In the latter, the audience's privileged knowledge of the set-up allows for the build up of suspense, with the intention of amplifying the comic effect when Mr Wilson uses his toiletries. Walter Matthau's performance adds to the comic effect of both these scenes, particularly through his exaggerated facial expressions. Steve Shaviro argues that slapstick "provides a carnivalesque release from the usual standards of responsibility, emphasises grotesque inversions of hierarchical power relations, and directly assaults the icons of social responsibility." While Dennis is not bound by the same codes of behaviour as adults, the slapstick antics in the first half of *Dennis the Menace* rob Mr Wilson of his dignity and undermine status as an authority figure, albeit temporarily. Although Mr Wilson is made to look ridiculous, and is almost castrated by a canoe, the status quo is quickly restored. He bears no lasting signs of physical damage and Dennis is punished for his behaviour (at least in-keeping with his permissive parents' standards). In contrast to Kevin in *Home Alone*, Dennis rarely shows any awareness that his activities could have negative consequences. In interviews, John Hughes was keen to point out that the boy was curious but not malicious.

⁷⁸⁶ Jerry Palmer, *The Logic of the Absurd* (London: BFI, 1987).

“His pranks basically come out of innocence,” the filmmaker stated in a television interview.

The humour in the second half of the movie takes a more ambivalent turn, when the film's sinister villain Switchblade Sam rides into Dennis' idyllic town via the railroad. For decades, as Todd DePastino observes, middle-class concerns about the railroad and vagrancy have reflected “the struggles between the propertied and unpropertied over the uses of public space, fears about the growth of a propertyless proletariat, and anxieties about the loss of traditional social controls in American cities.”⁷⁸⁷ Through the character of Sam, *Dennis the Menace* suggests that external dangers pose the greatest threat to the suburban utopia that the characters inhabit. Rather than questioning the affluence of the community, the film plays on middle-class fears about the poor's intrusion into their communities and homes. Consistent with the representational strategies used in *Dennis the Menace*, the villain's status as an outsider is signalled in an overt manner. Sam's dirty, unkempt appearance and his cigarette smoking indicate that he does not meet the standards of suburban life. His lack of personal hygiene contrasts with the cleanliness of Dennis, who is shown splashing about in the bathtub on more than one occasion. While Switchblade Sam is Hughes' creation, his choice of a drifter as the antagonist in *Dennis the Menace* is consistent with the attitude that Hank Ketcham's comic strip displayed towards individuals who did not fit into the suburbs. Lynn Spigel argues that, in the comic strip, “these misfits were drop-outs (always single men) who served no purpose in the social maintenance of family life.”⁷⁸⁸ However, consistent with the viewpoint adopted in several of John Hughes' screenplays, the film moves beyond simply suggesting that Sam is unsuited to the suburban environment and positions him as a threat that needs to be neutralised.

Dennis the Menace goes to great pains to suggest that Switchblade Sam is a thief. Numerous scenes show him stealing handbags and breaking and entering to steal jewellery and other personal items. Whereas the burglars in *Home Alone* are purely interested in money and material goods, Sam's motivation is less certain. James Kincaid argues that the film has an

⁷⁸⁷ Todd De Pastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 8.

⁷⁸⁸ Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 241.

obvious “child molester” subtext.⁷⁸⁹ On several occasions, Switchblade Sam watches children without their parent's knowledge. Shortly after his arrival in the town, Sam swaggers along the backyards of Dennis’ street, trampling flowers and blowing his cigarette smoke into the clean air. A shot of Sam’s shadow looming over a small child with his back turned to the white picket fence is followed by a low angle shot of the topless child playing with an apple with Sam stood in the background. After close up on Sam’s shadow, the camera fixes on the child’s face as he turns to see the man. The brief interaction that follows suggests that Sam’s interest is in the child’s apple, which he proceeds to jab out of the child’s hand with a switchblade. Another scene shows Sam stealing Margaret’s doll, while the children play in the tree house. In this sequence, the tramp covertly watches the children from below or observes them from above. The diagonal compositions in these shots emphasise that his activities are clandestine. In a later scene, Sam loiters in the shadows by a children’s playground. A point of view shot suggests that he is primarily interested in a handbag that is hanging from the back of a stroller. However, the majority of shots in this scene show Sam watching children play on the swings while he smokes a cigarette. Shots taken from various angles emphasise that the mothers’ backs are turned to the tramp and they are therefore unaware he is watching their children, although he attracts the suspicion of the local sheriff (who is, incidentally the only non-white character in the movie). Sam’s presence on screen is scored by an ominous piece of music, which uses an insistent bass note to emphasise his looming presence and creates an unsettling effect by mixing timbres and through sinuous, chromatic harmonies. In all of these sequences, cinematography and editing position Sam as a voyeur, but the action and dialogue deny that he is a paedophile. These moments in the film raise the spectre of paedophilia in order to deny it. As the *Washington Post*’s reviewer put it, “A child molester? Not in a Hughes movie.”⁷⁹⁰

While Switchblade Sam’s motives remain ambiguous, the climax of *Dennis the Menace* suggests that the threat he poses to suburban life should be dealt with robustly. Following an altercation with Mr Wilson, Dennis runs away. He rides his bicycle through the woods, which are made to look threatening through the use of mist and eerie lighting. Sam is

⁷⁸⁹ James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 121.

⁷⁹⁰ Rita Kempley, ‘*Dennis the Menace*,’ *Washington Post*, 25 June 1993, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/dennisthemencepgkempley_a0a396.htm

hidden in the shadows and suddenly becomes visible as he turns around to grab Dennis, whose initial reaction is fear. The tramp tells Dennis that he is his “hostage,” which the boy assumes is a game. In the scenes that follow, Dennis ties Sam up, feeds him a large quantity of baked beans, knocks him unconscious and sets him on fire. As with the incidents involving Mr Wilson, the gags are set up by Dennis trying to solve specific problems and it is evident that the boy does not intend to injure his kidnapper. For instance, Dennis makes Sam eat the beans so they can find the key to the handcuffs, which has been dropped in the cooking pot, and he covers Sam with a blanket so he will not get cold but accidentally drags it across the open fire. However, the slapstick in this scene has a more overt narrative purpose than the physical comedy in the first half of the film. The extreme pain and visible, lasting physical damage inflicted on Switchblade Sam suggests a more aggressive attitude towards the character. At the end of the film, the bloodied and bruised Sam is paraded in front of the neighbourhood to the cheers of the assembled children and adults. There is little ambiguity as to whose side the audience is supposed to take.

Miracle on 34th Street

Miracle on 34th Street combines elements of melodrama, romantic comedy, the family film and courtroom drama. Although a child, Susan, features prominently in the film, the narrative is much more focused on adult relationships and preoccupations. As *Boxoffice*'s reviewer observed, “Despite its holiday-classic standing, *Miracle on 34th Street* is not, in either incarnation, a lighthearted romp for the kiddies.”⁷⁹¹ The movie deals with relatively serious topics, including mental illness, trial by media, corruption in the judicial system and questions of faith. The storyline involving Kris Kringle's arrest is more sinister than in the original film. Tony (the fired Cole's Santa) goads Kris with accusations that he is mentally unstable and, consistent with contemporary anxieties, that he may be a child molester. Kris lashes out at the man after he says, “You got a thing for the little ones? ‘Cause they ain't much good for nothin' else, are they?” The film also deviates from the 1947 version in its resolution. In the original film, the lawyer wins the case by arguing that the U.S. postal service recognises Santa Claus as a real person, so the U.S. government must too. The 1994 movie shows Susan approaching the judge's bench with a Christmas card that contains a one-dollar bill. On the bank note, the words “In God We Trust” are circled. The judge concludes that if the U.S. Treasury can believe in God, then the people of New York can

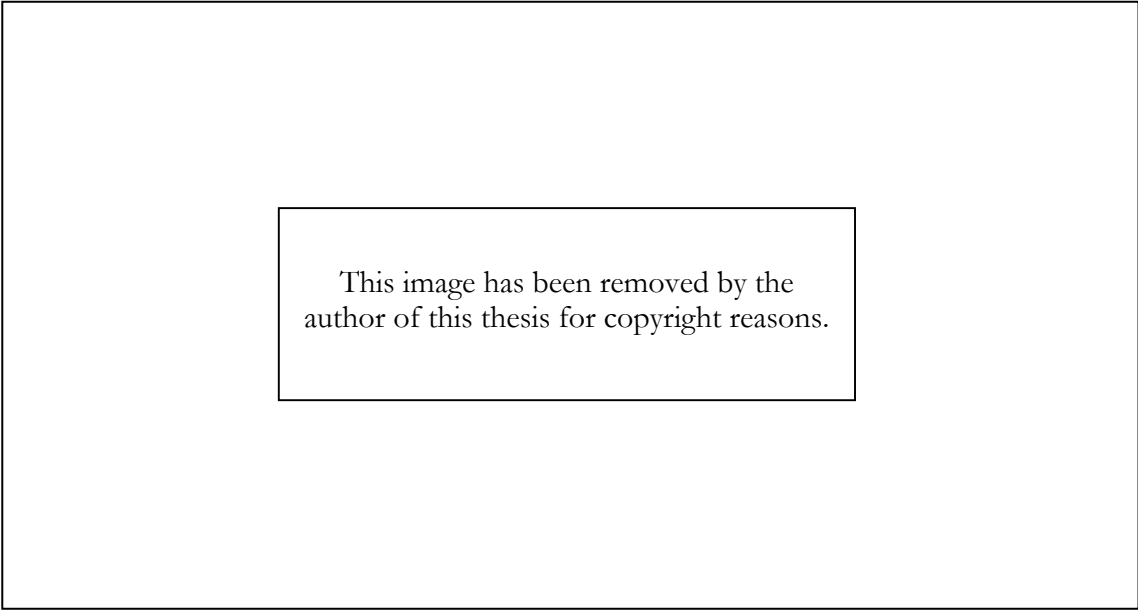
⁷⁹¹ Eric Williams, “*Miracle on 34th Street*,” *Boxoffice*, January 1995, R-4.

believe in Santa Claus. In fact, *Miracle on 34th Street* repeatedly emphasises Santa Claus' almost religious significance. At one point, Kris explains what he represents:

I'm a symbol of the human ability to suppress the selfish and hateful tendencies that rule the major part of our lives. If you can't believe, if you can't accept anything on faith, then you're doomed to a life dominated by doubt.

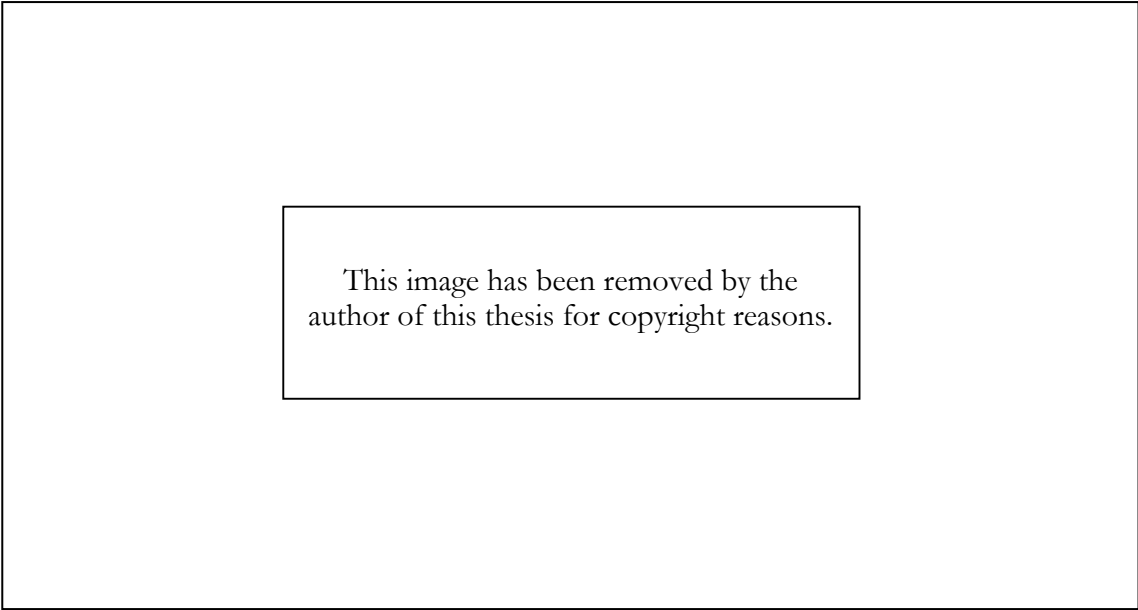
However, the figure of Santa Claus is a complex signifier of America's belief in both spiritual and materialistic values. In many respects, *Miracle on 34th Street* seeks to reconcile these aspects of American society.

Nostalgia pervades the 1994 *Miracle on 34th Street*, but also through the film's aesthetic. A few aspects of the mise-en-scène offer a clearer indication of period. In particular, the presence of technology, such as television sets, camcorders and mobile phones, helps to place the film in the 1990s. The mise-en-scène obscures the period in which the movie is set. In addition to festive reds and greens, the colour palate is dominated by brown and cream tones, which give the locations a sense of timelessness. Although the characters' hairstyles reflect 1990s fashions, the costumes reference the late 1940s and the synthetic fibres, bright colours and prominent branding associated with early 1990s children's fashions are entirely absent. Instead, the children in the film wear structured clothes, such as fitted wool or felt coats, smart dresses, berets and flat caps. Most noticeably, policemen wear a uniform that is almost identical to the New York City Police's uniform in the 1940s. In certain instances, the costume design directly references the original film. For example, Kris Kringle's tweed three-piece suit and Susan's red coat with fur collar and red hat closely resemble outfits worn by the same characters in the 1947 production. It seems little coincidence that the movie's poster featured the actors in these particular costumes. The cinematography in *Miracle on 34th Street* also references Hollywood cinema of the 1940s. The film includes fewer close-ups and more mid-shot compositions and plans américains than many early 1990s films. The pace of editing is also fairly restrained, although longer duration shots often involve camera movement. The overall effect of *Miracle on 34th Street's* nostalgic aesthetic is to reinforce the narrative's articulation of themes of faith and family togetherness.



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 57 – *Miracle on 34 Street*



This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 58 – *Miracle on 34th Street*

Miracle on 34th Street's primary critique is of the domination of American retail by heartless, corporate chains.⁷⁹² A feud between Cole's, a traditional department store, and Shopper's Express, a modern discount store, is central to the movie's narrative. Cole's has a 1920s exterior and the toy department is traditionally decorated, using a colour palate of reds, greens and golds. In contrast, the Shopper's Express store has an angular glass and metal facade, with garish signage and neon lighting. The sales assistants wear a grey and black uniform that evokes Soviet military attire. The slick, depersonalised shopping environment of Shopper's Express contrasts with the welcoming warmth of Cole's toy department. In the original *Miracle on 34th Street*, Kris ends the hostilities between the two competing store owners. In the 1994 film, however, the ruthless CEO of Shopper's Express, Victor Landberg, is the main antagonist. He is a caricature of the "evil" corporate executive and tries to put Cole's out of business, initially through aggressive pricing policies and later by setting up Kris' arrest. Through Landberg's actions, the film suggests that modern corporations engage in highly unethical, arguably "un-American", practices in order to put older institutions out of business. During the trial, Landberg bribes the prosecutor and tells the judge that he will fund his re-election campaign. Although *Miracle on 34th Street* condemns corporate greed and corruption, the movie does not challenge Americans' freedom to consume or the idea of free enterprise. Given the film's nostalgic aesthetic and ostensibly anti-corporate sentiment, the inclusion of product placements in *Miracle on 34th Street* seems somewhat incongruous, but was clearly determined by commercial pressures. Prior to the film's climax, shots of a billboard advertising 7-Up and the Goodyear blimp appear in a montage sequence that includes shots of signs created by small business owners, workers' unions and children in support of Santa Claus. The appearances of these brands suggest that not all real-life corporations are as corrupt and misanthropic as the fictional Shoppers Express.

⁷⁹² Both of the department stores that featured in the original movie struggled to compete during the 1980s and 1990s. British American Tobacco liquidated Gimbels in 1986 and, as many journalists noted in coverage of the 1994 movie, Macy's filed for bankruptcy in 1992 but remained in business.

These images have been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Image 59 – *Miracle on 34th Street*

In a *New York Times* article on “The Gentle Art of Creating a Family Film”, Lisa Liebman ventured that Hughes “may have been caught between trying to appeal to children and trying to interest adults”.⁷⁹³ Whereas children are the protagonists in John Hughes other family films released between 1990 and 1994, Susan is not the lead in *Miracle on 34th Street*. Moreover, Susan is presented from an adult’s perspective. Susan’s loss of belief in Santa Claus not only reflects her mother’s bitterness but also represents the erosion of childhood innocence. Although Susan has adopted certain adult traits, like Sue in *Curly Sue*, she harbours an apparently innate desire for a conventional nuclear family. She tells Kris that she would like “A house, a brother and a dad” for Christmas and agrees that if she would believe in Santa Claus if she received all of those things. Much like the original, the film’s conclusion is unapologetically sentimental. *Miracle on 34th* ends by uniting the nuclear family and providing them with a large suburban home, which is significantly bigger than its 1947 counterpart and filled with expensive furnishings, Christmas decorations and toys. Not only does the film’s ending restore Susan’s innocence and belief in Santa Claus, it also positions the upper-middle-class nuclear family as an aspirational American ideal.

Conclusions

“Reflecting Zizek’s description of postmodern “post-ideological” knowingness,” argues Sandra Chang-Kredly, “the *Home Alone* films confuse the roles of childhood and adulthood under the cloak of cynicism.”⁷⁹⁴ Certainly, in Kevin’s display of independence, particularly through his acts of consumption and his defence of property, there is a blurring of the boundaries between childhood and adulthood. Joe Kincheloe suggests that children’s engagement with television, as depicted in *Home Alone*, allows children to “gain unrestricted knowledge about things once kept secret from adults”, which means that “the authority of adulthood is undermined.”⁷⁹⁵ While exposure to the media accounts for the way in which the children speak in the *Home Alone* films, Kevin’s class privilege is what gives him the cultural and economic capital to act out his fantasies and to evade adult detection. *Curly Sue* works to reinstate Sue’s innocence by securing her position within an affluent nuclear

⁷⁹³ Lisa Liebman, “The Gentle Art of Creating a Family Film,” *New York Times*, 27 November 1994, H22.

⁷⁹⁴ Sandra Chang-Kredly, “Cinematic Representations of Childhood: Privileging the Adult Viewer,” in *Childhoods: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 209.

⁷⁹⁵ Kincheloe, “Home Alone and Bad to the Bone,” 35.

family and by making her more feminine. By offering indications of the girl's desire for a family and a normal childhood from the outset, the narrative resolution feels less forced. Similarly, Susan in *Miracle on 34th Street* regains her faith in Santa Claus and receives a large suburban home and family for Christmas. In contrast to these films, *Dennis the Menace* sidesteps any concerns about contemporary childhood and goes to great lengths to suggest Dennis' innocence. At the end of the film, even after his abduction, he is still the same happy and mischievous boy that he was at the start.

Slapstick comedy is a central feature of the *Home Alone* films and *Dennis the Menace*, as well as in Hughes' other family film of this period *Baby's Day Out*. In all of these films, the perpetrators of slapstick violence are children. However, they demonstrate differing levels of awareness of their actions. In *Home Alone*, Kevin purposefully defends his house from the burglars and in *Home Alone 2* appears to take great delight in exacting his revenge on Harry and Marv. In *Dennis the Menace*, the slapstick sequences involving Mr Wilson can be interpreted as a limited challenge to his patriarchal authority, although the gag structure makes it clear that Dennis does not intend to hurt his elderly neighbour. However, the filmmakers then use Dennis' innocence as an alibi for the slapstick violence against Switchblade Sam, reinforcing his naivete through the use of dialogue. All of these situations generate their comic effects through the inversion of power relations in the real world and are therefore fantasies of child omnipotence. This strategy is taken an extreme in Hughes' other 1990s film, *Baby's Day Out*, in which a crawling baby manages to cause three incompetent kidnappers various forms of bodily harm. The targets of the humour in the slapstick climaxes of these films are all outsiders who pose a threat to middle-class suburban life and the family. In this respect, can be viewed as appealing to conservative anxieties during the early 1990s.

John Hughes' family films demonstrate a thematic preoccupation with family unity that pervades the narratives of many New Hollywood family films. All of the films end with families reunited and present their values as apparently universal. As Sandra Chang-Kredly argues, "The family film aims for universal appeal, drawing on or reversing the assumedly shared ideology of childhood innocence and purity, and the universality of childhood."⁷⁹⁶ The representations of childhood in Hughes' films are rooted in a white, middle-class,

⁷⁹⁶ Sandra Chang-Kredly, "Cinematic Representations of Childhood: Privileging the Adult Viewer," in *Childhoods: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 209.

American context. Privilege in these films is not remarked on, beyond the awe and jealousy expressed by poor characters in relation to the material possessions of the rich. The film's articulations of "family values" and, most overtly in the case of *Miracle on 34th Street*, "faith" are determined by the characters' affluent backgrounds and Christian values. The economic security enjoyed by Grey in *Curly Sue*, for instance, means that her decision to prioritize her new family is a straightforward one. Similarly, although it remains unclear whether Dorey in *Miracle on 34th Street* will quit her job, she and Bryan are sufficiently wealthy that the decision will not be determined by their financial situation. Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that, "every time we use a classificatory concept like 'family', we are making both a description and a prescription, which not perceived as such because it is (more or less) universally accepted and goes without saying."⁷⁹⁷ In this respect, Hughes family films contribute to a wider process of positioning the white, middle-class nuclear family as the unspoken norm. The movies certainly work to resolve issues threatening family unity. However, Peter Kramer suggests that family films "offer themselves as a temporary relief from the real-life problems which their stories focus on but can never solve."⁷⁹⁸

Henry Giroux argues that recent child-oriented media products children's pleasures seem increasingly bound to consumerist desires:

The mass media, especially the world of Hollywood films, constructs a dream-like world of security, coherence and childhood innocence where kids find a place to situate themselves... children's films provide a high tech visual space where adventure and pleasure meet in a fantasy world of possibilities and a commercial space of consumerism and commodification.⁷⁹⁹

The *Home Alone* films and *Miracle on 34th Street*, in particular, may argue for a more restrained approach to consumption, but they do not critique the inequalities that capitalism perpetuates. The upper-middle-class lifestyles that the films present are positioned as aspirational, the characters living embodiments of the American Dream. Consistent with the studios' policies during this period, product placements are much more visible in the 20th Century Fox films (the *Home Alone* films and *Miracle on 34th Street*) than in the Warner Bros movies (*Curly Sue* and *Dennis the Menace*). In the case of *Home Alone*, these

⁷⁹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu. "On the Family as a Realized Category," *Theory, Culture & Society* 13, no. 3. (1996), 20.

⁷⁹⁸ Krämer, "Would You Take Your Child To See This Film." 304.

⁷⁹⁹ Henry A. Giroux, *Breaking In To The Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 101.

moments allow for some overt product placements, as well as presenting Kevin McCallister/Macaulay Culkin as an “idol of consumption” for pre-teen children.

Consistent with Paul Grainge’s assessment that nostalgia is “the result of specific technological transformations and strategies of niche marketing,” both *Dennis the Menace* and *Miracle on 34th Street* were developed at a time when earlier versions of the source material were circulating via new media technologies.⁸⁰⁰ During the 1990s, the television series of *Dennis the Menace* (1959-1963) became a major part of Nick at Nite’s schedule. Similarly, by the 1990s, the 1947 *Miracle on 34th Street* had become a Christmas “classic”, through television showings and video sales. There was arguably an additional commercial motivation underpinning the decision to obscure the time period in which the films are set. By utilizing a “timeless” aesthetic, the films have dated less than many other contemporary family and child-oriented films. These texts are therefore ideally suited to the logic of a marketplace in which films have an extensive textual afterlife on television, video and other in other formats. Similarly, movies that are set on major national holidays will almost certainly be aired during those periods. In fact, a 1993 article in the *New York Times*’ argued that “conspicuous references” to the festive season were present in numerous recent movies, including the *Home Alone* series, making them more likely to become regular fixtures on television during the holidays. However, the author conceded, “adding a dash of Christmas to a movie is nothing new, and the reason has often been commerce.”⁸⁰¹

⁸⁰⁰ Grainge, “Nostalgia and Style in Retro America,” 29.

⁸⁰¹ Pat H. Broeske, “Hollywood Is Seasoning Films With Holiday Gimmicks,” *New York Times*, 19 December 1993, H16.

Conclusion:

“Mainstream Maverick”

Through luck, skill, timing, and tenacity, John Hughes has become a genuine anomaly in the film industry: He’s his own studio. Not since the glory days of Sam Goldwyn and David Selznick has a mainstream maverick made such a name for himself. True, those two old icons were masters of the prestige release; Hughes, with his Chicago-based Hughes Entertainment company, is more like a Midwestern factory boss overseeing the mass production of jujubes [candy].⁸⁰²

Ty Burr, *Entertainment Weekly*

This thesis has examined John Hughes’ career from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s and explained why he became one of the most powerful filmmakers in Hollywood. As I have shown, a range of industrial transformations formed the backdrop to his career and enabled him to enjoy his peculiar status as a “mainstream maverick”. Although Hughes was attuned to mainstream industrial trends, he managed to secure a considerable amount of autonomy, as studios deferred to his expertise in courting Middle American audiences. The basis for this research was to challenge assumptions concerning New Hollywood cinema and to move beyond ahistorical approaches to authorship in cinema. As I have shown, there is considerable value to considering films that do not sit at either of the poles of blockbuster or “indie” production. This conclusion is divided into three sections. The first part of the chapter summarises my findings concerning John Hughes career and New Hollywood cinema. The second part of the chapter discusses the ways in which my analyses of Hughes’ films build on previous scholarly work on the teen movie, comedian comedy and family film. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the productivity of my methodology and the implications it has for future research.

⁸⁰² Ty Burr, “Video Review: *Curly Sue*,” *Entertainment Weekly*, Issue 112, April 3rd, 1992, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,310101,00.html>

John Hughes and the U.S. Film Industry

The first section of the thesis examined aspects of John Hughes' career in relation to certain transformations within the U.S. entertainment industry. Through extensive use of primary materials, I have shown how Hughes took advantage and, in some instances, anticipated trends within the production and commercial exploitation of films. Hughes' background in advertising provided him with business and creative expertise that he utilized to develop movie packages that could be easily promoted and sold in a range of markets. Hughes was part of a new generation of "creative producers" who controlled both the commercial and artistic aspects of the filmmaking process. By establishing his own production company, Hughes Entertainment, Hughes gained greater control over his projects and was able to secure multi-picture distribution deals with the major Hollywood studios. Hughes' ability capitalized on the opportunities created by the expansion of ancillary markets formed a significant part of his success as a commercial filmmaker. Throughout his career, he showed that he was capable of developing movies that would sell well on video. During the 1980s, Hughes used his musical knowledge to develop soundtracks that were commercially successful and, in the case of *Pretty in Pink*, well-received by critics. The creation of Hughes Music in the late 1980s reflected Hughes' reputation as a hit maker, as well as the entertainment industry's investment in film and music cross-promotions during this period. To some extent, Hughes' difficulties in turning Hughes Music into a standalone record label show how changes to the U.S. recording industry made it difficult to operate outside of mainstream tastes. However, the contrasting fortunes of the *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* soundtracks indicate the interacting cultural factors that contribute to chart success. Hughes may have exerted some influence over the tastes of his teenage audiences but he could not popularize bands and genres of music that were too alternative and, often, antagonistic to his target audience.

Hughes' career demonstrates that it is necessary to qualify assumptions about the role that "celebrity" plays in determining a filmmaker's influence within Hollywood. Hughes only ever achieved minor celebrity in the mainstream media. In the early stages of his career, he made a greater effort to engage with the press and used interviews in publications such as *Rolling Stone* and *Seventeen*, and on MTV, to address his target audience of teenagers. He presented an image of himself as a "hip" young adult, who was genuinely attuned to the tastes and concerns of teenagers. His teenage cast members and musical collaborators helped to reinforce this image, by corroborating his claims and commenting on his superior

knowledge of popular music trends. During the late 1980s, as Hughes struggled to come to terms with his dwindling demographics, his image as a Hollywood yuppie started to undermine his credibility as a chronicler of Middle American life. Later in his career, as he started to focus on the family audience, Hughes started to dress more soberly and emphasized his credentials as a parent. Although Hughes deliberately cultivated his image in the media, in an attempt to appeal to his target audiences, there is little evidence to suggest that his celebrity image had a significant impact on his dealings with the major studios. Even public criticisms of Hughes in the trade press and mainstream publications had little impact on his industrial power.

This exploration of John Hughes career has offered some insights into how the logic of branding influenced Hollywood cinema during the 1980s and 1990s. My examination of Universal and Paramount during the 1980s suggests that studios still tried to create a sense of the studio “brand.” As Hughes’ relationship with Ned Tanen suggests, the preferences of senior executives played a significant role in shaping the output of studios. Both studios clearly attempted to create consistency between publicity campaigns different films, presumably by closely supervising the creation of marketing materials. The 1986 “Make it a Paramount Summer” campaign is an explicit demonstration of how Paramount sought to consolidate their brand image and capitalize on their market dominance during the 1980s. Hughes’ time at Paramount during the 1980s demonstrated that he was particularly attuned to the studio’s so-called “high concept” approach. However, my analysis of the promotion and textual features of John Hughes’ movies, suggests a need to qualify what is meant by “high concept”, a term that is ubiquitous in discussions of New Hollywood cinema. While Justin Wyatt’s influential work on high concept provides some pertinent insights into the U.S. film industry during the 1980s, high concept’s value as a way for understanding the operations of the film industry is somewhat limited.

The production contexts of these films demonstrate the collaborative nature of filmmaking in Hollywood cinema. During the mid-1980s, when Hughes was building his career as a director and producer, he clearly tried to maintain a certain level of aesthetic consistency between projects, as part of his strategy of brand formation. He was able to do this by working closely with the same creative personnel on each film. Evidently, these collaborators had a significant influence on the look and feel of Hughes’ films. As I have noted, the films directed by Howard Deutch are shot and edited differently to Hughes’

own directorial efforts. In this regard, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* are as much Deutch's films as they are Hughes'. However, the movies were still positioned in the marketplace as John Hughes films and many critics responded to them as such. This continued during the early 1990s, when Hughes clearly had a considerable level of creative control over the projects that he produced.

Hughes' Films as Texts

The analysis of films has formed a significant part of this study because the popularity of Hughes' films cannot be solely attributed to promotional and other commercial factors. The interpretations of films offered in this study are not intended to be definitive. Rather, they are explorations of some of the ways in which Hughes' films reflect their commercial priorities and attempt to stimulate audience pleasure. An integral part of John Hughes' approach to commercial filmmaking was to create consistency between his films. This strategy allowed him to develop a "signature product" and ensured that new films fulfilled audience expectations. Hughes' films tend to mix comedy with more sentimental scenes. Through parallel and multi-character narratives, Hughes used shifts in focalization to justify changes in tone. Although his screenplays incorporated some verbal humour, much of the comedy in Hughes' films consisted of visual gags and slapstick. There are undoubtedly thematic consistencies between Hughes films. They all place a particular emphasis on the family and assert the importance of heterosexual coupling. Accordingly, all of his narratives conclude with either the unification of the family or the creation of a couple. These endings are usually motivated by regimes of generic verisimilitude. The stability of these conclusions is contingent on the narrative structures and character development. In some cases, the narrative resolutions are more convincing than others, and this has consequences for the films' negotiation of ideological issues.

My analysis of Hughes' teen films has shown a number of continuities between the texts, including the central roles played by female characters. Many of these textual features differentiated Hughes' films from the other teen-oriented movies, such as the sex comedies and slasher films of the early 1980s. Family relations are a theme in all of Hughes' teen films, whether they are presented in a dramatic fashion, as in *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*, or in a more light-hearted way, as in *Sixteen Candles* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. By paying attention to film form and narrative structure, I have tried

to move beyond the limitations of many studies of the teen film, which focus solely on plot. Drawing on work on the romantic comedy and melodrama, I have shown how the narrative structures of Hughes' teen films contributed to their pleasurable effects. The overall aesthetic of the movies was clearly another selling point of these productions and, as I noted, relates to their commercial and cultural contexts.

The films that Hughes produced which starred Chevy Chase, Steve Martin and John Candy do not necessarily fit within the frameworks proposed by Steve Seidman and Frank Krutnik in their work on comedian comedy. This problem is not isolated to Hughes' films, however. Conceptualizations of comedian comedy struggle to account for many New Hollywood comedian films because the performance styles of many 1980s comedy performers do not sit comfortably with models based on vaudeville and immediate post-vaudeville era comic performance. Even so, the intervention that scholars such as Seidman and Krutnik made has drawn attention to the extra-cinematic nature of comic culture and the relationship between comic performance and narrative. Building on their work allowed me to develop arguments concerning how Hughes' films attempt to tame and domesticate the comedian. In so doing, I have offered some insights into the relationship between narrative and performance, and the implications that the interplay between these two elements has for the film's negotiations of ideology. As the 1980s wore on, and Hughes reoriented his approach to focus more on the family audience, Hughes' comedian vehicles became more ideologically conservative.

The term family film, as was discussed in Chapter 6, has been used to describe a range of films developed to appeal to both adults and children. My analysis of John Hughes' family films demonstrates the varying extents to which these texts address children and adults. With their emphasis on slapstick humour and fantasies of child omnipotence the *Home Alone* films and *Dennis the Menace* arguably privilege the child spectator. However, the films provide adults with the opportunity to identify with the onscreen adults as well as the children. In these films, the slapstick elements help to work through social problems and hint at anxieties concerning childhood and perceived threats to suburban life. Although *Curly Sue* is essentially a romantic comedy, slapstick gags occur throughout the film, in an attempt to retain children's interest. *Miracle on 34th Street*, as critics remarked at the time, is more tailored to adult tastes. All of Hughes' family films play on the notion of children's innocence, but there is clearly a gendered aspect to *Curly Sue* and *Miracle on 34th Street*'s drive

to restore the female child's innocence. Through a romantic coupling, these two films also strive to contain the adult woman within the family. Whereas, during the 1980s, Hughes raised questions concerning privilege in his films, his 1990s family films present upper-middle-class suburban life as the ideal.

The Methods of "Cinema" History

Through its focus on a particular individual, John Hughes, one of the outcomes of this project has been to reflect on the productivity of approaches founded on assumptions about the auteur. Auteurist approaches to cinema, as I argued in the introduction, only offer a partial account of Hollywood history. Commercial filmmakers like John Hughes, who have not been granted auteur status by cultural gatekeepers, cannot easily be accommodated within a framework that stems from assumptions about aesthetic value. Although I have focused on John Hughes, the approaches that I have developed and the questions that I have raised could easily be applied to other commercial filmmakers.

This research has shown how analysis of primary materials can offer new insights into why and how certain filmmakers gain industrial power. As I have shown, through my examination of *Billboard* and numerous other publications the increased availability of these materials can enable scholars to offer new insights into New Hollywood cinema, which have the potential to challenge or build on established scholarly perspectives. Rather than relying on established accounts of New Hollywood cinema, historians should think about how new approaches and interpretative frameworks can illuminate understanding of particular periods and events. My critical evaluations of Hughes' career have drawn on work on scholarship in marketing, subcultures, cultural geography and popular musicology, as well as film and media studies. There are, of course, challenges to using a historical methodology. For instance, the complexities of Hollywood economics create certain difficulties when examining the operations of the U.S. entertainment industry. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that it is extremely difficult to find reliable financial data on Hollywood movies. Box office data is not reliable and can be manipulated by the studios and press. Similarly, data on home video and other ancillary markets is difficult to source and limited in its scope. The data that is available is still worthy of consideration, however, because it can provide indications of general trends or the relative performance of a particular movie. Moreover, as I have suggested in my discussion of Hughes' status

within the film industry, corporations like to quantify success and, particularly in the entertainment industry, the impression of success can sometimes outweigh economic reality. The complexity of the industrial contexts and Hughes' prolific output made structuring this project a difficult task. Inevitably, I had to omit considerable amounts of information in order to focus on certain case studies that I felt could offer insights into Hughes' career and the operations of the U.S. film industry during this period. The separation in this thesis between discussion of industry and the analysis of film texts was largely born of practical considerations. Wherever possible, I have tried to suggest links between films and their contexts.

My research also raises the need to think carefully about the productivity of genre frameworks and taxonomies. My analysis of John Hughes' work in the teen film, comedian comedy and family film has show that, in spite of various interventions in the field of genre studies, film scholars continue to view genre primarily in relation to the film text and the presence of consistent "semantic" and "syntactic" features. Both the teen film and the family film, as I have shown, are defined in no small part through their relationship to industry and audiences. However, relatively few studies give serious consideration to the film's commercial origins and their wider cultural circulation. There is a greater need, particularly in work on the teen film, to adopt self-reflexive approaches to studying particular genres. As I have argued, given the teen film's topicality and close relationship with music and fashions, greater attention needs to be paid to film form. Moreover, rather than relying on symptomatic analyses of plots, scholars should think more carefully about how Hollywood narratives are structured with regards to the creation of audience pleasure and the films' negotiations of ideology.

Through the use of a historical approach, this research has shown that both John Hughes and the commerce of Hollywood cinema are worthy of greater consideration. It has built on previous scholarship and revised a number of dominant assumptions about Hollywood cinema during the 1980s and 1990s. There is clearly much interesting and important work to be done in the future on New Hollywood cinema, but, through the examination of John Hughes' career, this study has made a contribution knowledge and understanding of the operations of the U.S. film industry during the 1980s and 1990s.

Bibliography

Abate, Michelle Ann. *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.

Abel, Richard. "History Can Work for You, You Know How to Use It." *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 107-112.

Acland, Charles. *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Albright, Ann Cooper. "Strategic Abilities: Negotiating the Disabled Body in Dance." In *Moving History/ Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, edited by Ann Dillis and Ann Cooper Albright, 56–66. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

Albright, Mark. "For toy stores, 'just in time' deliveries not soon enough." *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida), 23 December 1993, 1E.

Allen, Robert C. "Home Alone Together: Hollywood and the 'family film'." In *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences* edited by Richard Maltby and Melvyn Stokes, 109–134. London: BFI, 1999.

Allen, Robert C., and Douglas Gomery. *Film History: Theory & Practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985.

Allmusic. "The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: Awards." <http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-breakfast-club-mw0000193096/awards>

Allmusic. "Weird Science: Motion Picture Soundtrack: Awards." <http://www.allmusic.com/album/weird-science-mw0000320764/awards>

Allmusic. "Pretty in Pink Original Soundtrack Awards." <http://www.allmusic.com/album/pretty-in-pink-original-soundtrack-mw0000195345/awards>

Allmusic. "She's Having A Baby: Awards." <http://www.allmusic.com/album/shes-having-a-baby-mw0000194580/awards>,

Allmusic. "Some Kind of Wonderful Awards." <http://www.allmusic.com/album/some-kind-of-wonderful-mw0000650793/awards>

Altman, Charles F. "Towards a Historiography of American Film." *Cinema Journal* 16, no. 2, (Spring 1977): 1-25.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: BFI, 1999.

Ansen, David, with Peter McAlevey. "The Producer is King Again." *Newsweek*, 20 May 1985, 84.

Associated Press. "Hughes uses fresh insights in new film." *Midwest Telegraph Herald*, 29 June 1988, 17D.

Back Stage. "Illinois Film Office Enjoys Banner Year in '84." 8 March 1985, 43.

Back Stage. "Midwest Feature Films Blossom." 27 April 1984, 48.

Back Stage. "Hughes Opts for L.A." 24 May 1985, 39B.

Back Stage. "Hot Chicago Film Scene Lures John Hughes Back Home." 16 August 1985, 48.

Bailey, Steve, and James Hay. "Cinema and the premises of youth." In *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, edited by Steve Neale, 218–235. London: BFI, 2002.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rebels and His World*. Translation by Helen Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Banks, Jack. *Monopoly Television: MTV's Quest to Control the Music*. Oxford: Westview, 1996.

Bart, Peter. "Can Hughes Lose?" *Variety*, 8 April 1991, 3.

Barth, Jack. "John Hughes: On Geeks Bearing Gifts." *Film Comment*, June 1984.

Bateman, Louise. "Hollywood goes to the circus." *Screen International*, 17 July 1992, 4.

Beach, Christopher. *Class, Language and American Film Comedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

bell hooks. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, edited by bell hooks, 21–39. Boston: South End Press, 1992.

Berman, Marc. "Home Alone Takes Fox to Vid Pinnacle." *Variety*, 7 October 1991, 36.

Berman, Marc. "Majors Snare Lions Share Of Shrinking Wholesale Market." *Variety*, 19 August 1991, 28.

Berman, Marc. "NX-17 X'd out at Blockbuster; Wildmon, AFA Boycott lifted." *Variety*, 21 January 1991, 27.

Berman, Marc. "Sell-Through Revs Up." *Variety*, 18 February 1991, 30.

Berman, Marc. "Wildon & Co. seek to block NC-17 pix at Blockbuster chain." *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 25.

Billboard. "Sire Shuttters London Office: Ups A&R Role." 18 July 1981, 71.

Billboard. "MCA Inc Hits Financial High." 20 November 1982, 4.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 20 October 1984, 27.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 20 October 1984, 29.

Billboard. "Top Videodisks." 24 November 1984, 27.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 19 January 1985, 26.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of January 26, 1985." 26 January 1985, 29.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 26 January 1985, 34.

Billboard. "34 Titles Get ITA Gold." 9 February 1985, 32.

Billboard, "The Breakfast Club: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack," advertisement 23 February 1985, 7.

Billboard. "Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: The Breakfast Club." 23 February 1985, 66.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 9 March 1985, 36.

Billboard. "MTV Programming: As of May 8, 1985" 18 May 1985, 32.

Billboard, "MTV Programming as of March 13, 1985," 23 March 1985, 31.

Billboard. "Newsmakers." 13 April 1985, 8.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 20 April 1985, 34.

Billboard. "Wang Chung: 'Fire in the Twilight'." 20 April 1985, 68.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 27 April 1985, 29.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of April 17 1985." 27 April 1985, 36.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of April 24 1985." 4 May 1985, 37.

Billboard. "Producer Keith Forsey." 4 May 1985, 42.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of May 1 1985." 11 May 1985, 33.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of May 8 1985." 18 May 1985, 32.

Billboard, "Top Pop Albums." 18 May 1985, 72.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of May 15, 1985." 25 May 1985, 34.

Billboard. "Hits of the World." 25 May 1985, 65, 73.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 25 May 1985, 80.

Billboard. "MTV Programming: as of May 22 1985." 1 June 1985, 39.

Billboard. "MTV Programming: as of May 29, 1985." 8 June 1985, 41.

Billboard. "Audio Track: Los Angeles." 20 July 1985, 24.

Billboard. "Audio Track: Los Angeles." 3 August 1985, 41.

Billboard. "Audio Track: Los Angeles." 24 August 1985, 38.

Billboard. "Hot 100 Singles." 31 August 1985, 60.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 31 August 1985, 87.

Billboard. "Everyone's Watching MCA," advertisement, 31 August 1985, VSDA-51.

Billboard. "Hot Fall Titles." 31 August 1985, VSDA-65.

Billboard. "MTV Programming: As of August 28, 1985." *Billboard*, 7 September 1985, 33.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 12 October 1985, 34.

Billboard. "Hot 100 Singles." 19 October 1985, 86.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 26 October 1985, 27.

Billboard. "MTV Programming: For Week Ending October 26 1985." 26 October 1985, 41.

Billboard. "Top Videodisks," 2 November 1985, 33.

Billboard. "MTV Programming: As of October 23." 2 November 1985, 46.

Billboard. "Breakfast is Really Ready." advertisement, 16 November 1985, 27.

Billboard. "Hot 100 Singles." 16 November 1985, 64.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 16 November 1985, 73.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 23 November 1985, 28.

Billboard. "Top Videodisks." 30 November 1985, 27.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 28 December 1985, T-19.

Billboard. "Top Pop Album: Soundtracks/Original Cast." 28 December 1985, T-22.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 28 December 1985, T-32.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 18 January 1986, 28.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 25 January 1986, 31.

Billboard. "New Releases: Home Video." 8 February 1986, 26.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of January 29 1986." 8 February 1986, 52.

Billboard. "Pretty in Pink: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack." 15 February 1986, 70.

Billboard. "Video Track." 22 February 1986, 28.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 1 March 1986, 75.

Billboard. "MTV Programming as of February 26 1986." 8 March 1986, 45.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 12 April 1986, 55.

Billboard, "Top Videodisks." 19 April 1986, 61.

Billboard. "Top Videodisks." 19 April 1986, 61.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 19 April 1986, 62.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 3 May 1986, 72.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 10 May 1986, 60.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 17 May 1986, 48.

Billboard. "Hot 100: Sales." 7 June 1986, 89.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 19 July 1986, 42.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 26 July 1986, 42.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 23 August 1986, 91.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales Hit Chart." 30 August 1986, V-72.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rental Hit Chart." 30 August 1986, V-78.

Billboard. "Pretty in Pink: The Videocassette Event." print advertisement, 6 September 1986, 50.

Billboard. "Horror/Sci-Fi Vid Rental Review." 4 October 1986, H-6.

Billboard. "Horror/Sci-Fi Vid Sales Review." 4 October 1986, H-6.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 25 October 1986, 44.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Sales." 25 October 1986, 52.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums." 27 December 1986, Y-19.

Billboard. "Top Pop Albums: Soundtrack/Original Cast." 27 December 1986, Y-22.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 27 December 1987, Y-36.

Billboard. "Top Videocassettes Rentals." 26 December 1987, Y-40.

Billboard.com, "Simple Minds: Chart History,"

<http://www.billboard.com/artist/279405/simple-minds/chart>

Booth, Philip (NYT Regional Newspapers), "Candy, Martin and fuel to *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*," *Wilmington Morning Star* (North Carolina), 28 November 1987, 6D.

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson, "Linearity, Materialism and the Study of Early American Cinema," *Wide Angle* 5, no. 3 (1983).

Bordwell, David. *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Bould, Mark "John Hughes," in *Contemporary North American Directors: A Wallflower Guide*, eds. Allon, Yoram, Del Cullen and Hannah Patterson, 257–258. London: Wallflower Press, 2000.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "On the Family as a Realized Category." *Theory, Culture & Society* 13, no. 3 (1996): 19–26.

Bowden, Bill. "Where the Money Is... Or Isn't." *Arkansas Business*, 10 July 2000, <http://www.arkansasbusiness.com/article/64367/where-the-money-is-or-isnt>.

Boxoffice, "A Summer Summary," March 1991, 19.

Boxoffice, "*Dennis the Menace*," March 1993, SW-57.

Boxoffice. "National News: NATO/Showest." March 1991, 24.

Boxoffice. "Promo Guide: Warner Bros." April 1993, 16.

Boxoffice. "Trailers: *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*." November 1987, 6.

Box Office Mojo. “*Baby’s Day Out*: Weekly Box Office,”

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=babysdayout.htm>

Box Office Mojo. “*Baby’s Day Out*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=babysdayout.htm>

Box Office Mojo. “*Beethoven*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=beethoven.htm>

Box Office Mojo. “*The Breakfast Club*: Box Office Summary,”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=breakfastclub.htm>

Box Office Mojo. “*Curly Sue*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=curlysue.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. “*Curly Sue*: Weekly Box Office.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=curlysue.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. “*Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=ferrisbuellersdayoff.htm>

Box Office Mojo. “*Home Alone*: Summary.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=homealone.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. “*Home Alone*: Weekly.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=homealone.htm>

Box Office Mojo. “*Home Alone 2*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=homealone2.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. “*Miracle on 34th Street*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=miracleon34thstreet.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. “*Miracle on 34th Street*: Weekly Box Office.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=miracleon34thstreet.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. “*Planes, Trains and Automobiles*: Box Office Summary.”

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=planestrainsandautomobiles.htm>

Box Office Mojo. "Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Weekly Box Office."

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=planestrainsandautomobiles.htm>

Box Office Mojo. "Pretty in Pink: Box Office Summary."

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=prettyinpink.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. "Pretty in Pink: Weekly Box Office"

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekly&id=prettyinpink.htm>.

Box Office Mojo. "Sixteen Candles: Box Office Summary."

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=sixteencandles.htm>

Box Office Mojo. *She's Having A Baby*: Box Office Summary."

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=sheshavingababy.htm>

Box Office Mojo. "Weird Science: Box Office Summary."

<http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=weirdscience.htm>

Bleach, Anthony C. "Postfeminist cliques: Class, Postfeminism, and the Molly Ringwald-John Hughes Films." *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 24–44.

Bordwell, David. *The Way Hollywood Tells It*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Brabazon, Tara. *From Revolution to Revelation: Generation X, Popular Memory and Cultural Studies*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

Brickman, Barbara Jane *New American Teenagers: The Lost Generation of Youth in 1970s Film*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2012.

Britton, Andrew. "Blissing Out: The Politics of Reaganite Entertainment. (1986)." In *Britton on Film: The Complete Film Criticism of Andrew Britton*, edited by Barry Keith Grant, 97–154. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2009.

Broeske, Pat H. "Hollywood Is Seasoning Films With Holiday Gimmicks." *New York Times*, 19 December 1993, H16.

Brown, Bill. "How To Do Things with Things (A Toy Story)." *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 935–964.

Brown, Noel. *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, From Shirley Temple to Harry Potter*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2012.

Bruzzi, Stella. *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Postwar Hollywood*. London: BFI, 2006.

Buckland, Warren. "Solipsistic film criticism: Review of *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 288–298.

Buckland, Warren. *Directed by Stephen Spielberg: The Poetics of the Contemporary Blockbuster*. London: Continuum, 2006.

Buckland, Warren. *Directed by Stephen Spielberg: The Poetics of the Contemporary Blockbuster*. London: Continuum, 2006.

Burr, Ty. "Movie Review: *Dennis the Menace*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 9 July 1993, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,307122,00.html>

Burr, Ty. "Video Review: *Home at Home*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 23 August 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,315280,00.html>.

Business Wire. "Hi Tech Expressions to Change Name." 6 June 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

Business Wire. "Holiday Miracle." 6 December 1994. Lexis Nexis Academic.

Canby, Vincent. "Comedy That Smirks at Itself." *New York Times*, 16 April 1989. H1.

Carter, Bill. "Him Alone." *New York Times*, 4 August 1991, SM30.

Carter, Jonathan, and Chip Carter. "Kids Extra Video Games Reviews." *Entertainment Weekly*, 21 October 1994, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,304115,00.html>.

Caughie, John. "Introduction." In *Theories of Authorship: A Reader* edited by John Caughie, 9–16. London: Routledge, 1981.

CBS. *This Morning*. 22 November 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

Chang-Kredly, Sandra. "Cinematic Representations of Childhood: Privileging the Adult Viewer." In *Childhoods: A Handbook*, edited by Gaile S. Cannella and Lourdes Diaz Soto, 203–211. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

Chapman, James, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper. "Introduction." In *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*, edited by James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, 1–10. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007.

Champlin, Charles. "On the Lot With Frank Mancuso, New Age Mogul." *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-09-10/entertainment/ca-2671_1_frank-mancuso.

Chin, Brian. "Dance Trax." *Billboard*, 1 March 1986, 57.

Chin, Brian. "Dance Trax." *Billboard*, 22 February 1986, 57.

Christgau, Robert. *Village Voice*, 25 June 1985, <http://www.robertchristgau.com/xg/cg/cgv6-85.php>.

Cieply, Michael. "Creative Tension: Sources See Changes at Paramount," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 July 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-07-31/entertainment/ca-287_1_paramount-spokeswoman.

Cieply, Michael. "Fox Says 'Big Deal' to New Hollywood Frugality." *Los Angeles Times*, 14 February 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-14/business/fi-1646_1_fox-film.

Citron, Alan. "Blockbuster vs. the World." *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 1990, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-07-22/business/fi-980_1_southern-california-video.

Coates, Claudia. "Virtue plays an important role in *Baby*." *Kentucky New Era*, 20 February 1988, 5B.

Coates, Norma. "Teenyboppers, Groupies and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s." *Popular Music Studies*, 15, no. 1 (2003): 65–94.

Considine, David M. *The Cinema of Adolescence*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1985.

Considine, J.D. "Short Rock Takes: Original Soundtrack: Pretty in Pink." *Musician*, April 1986, 92.

Cook, David A. *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Copeland, Nicholas, and Christine Labuski. *The World of Wal-Mart: Discounting the American Dream*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Corliss, Richard. "Is There Life After Teenpix?" *Time*, 18 February, 1985, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,960765,00.html>.

Corliss, Richard. "Growing Pains: *Pretty in Pink*." *Time*, 3 March 1986, 3.

Corliss, Richard. 'Well, Hello Molly!' *Time*, May 26, 1986, 66–71.

Corrigan, Timothy *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*. London: Routledge. 1991, 108.

Cross, Gary. *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Cross, Gary, *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern Childhood*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Cuff, Daniel F. "Head of Video Chain Expects Consolidation." *New York Times*, 13 June 1988, D4.

deCordova, Richard. "Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees." *Camera Obscura* 23 (May 1990), 91–107.

Deitz, Geoffrey. "Studios play along with video games." *Variety*, 18 November 1991, 1.

Denby, David "Happy Birthday, Sweet Sixteen." *New York*, 28 May 1984, 96.

Denby, David. "Nothing in Common," *New York Magazine*, 28 July 1986, 60.

Denisoff, R. Serge. *Inside MTV*. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1988.

Dennett, Andrea Stulman. "The Dime Museum Freak Show Reconfigured as 'Talk Show.'" In *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, edited by Rosemary Garland Thomson, 315–326. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

De Pastino, Todd. *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

DeVaney, Ann. "Critical Viewing: The Depiction of Women in John Hughes' Teen Movies." *Feminist Collections* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1987): 4–6.

Dick, Bernard K. *Engulfed: The Death of Paramount Pictures and the Birth of Corporate Hollywood*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001.

Dobson, Patricia. "Baby's Day Out." *Screen International*, 8 July 1994, 22.

Dobson, Patricia. "Miracle on 34th Street." *Screen International*, 2 December 1994, 16.

Doherty, Thomas. *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988.

Dougherty, Margot, and Melina Gerosa. "Big Kid: *Home Alone*'s Macaulay Culkin - Why kids are suddenly showing grow-up clout at the box office." *Entertainment Weekly*, 7 December 1990, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,318804,00.html>.

Driscoll, Catherine. *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Berg, 2011.

Dyer, Richard *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." In *Only Entertainment*, 2nd ed, edited by Richard Dyer, 19–35. London: Routledge, 2002.

Easton, Nina J. "Tanen Reigns Top Paramount Film Post." *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-11-22/business/ft-317_1_paramount-pictures-top-film.

Ebert, Roger. "John Hughes: When You're 16, You're More Serious Than You'll Ever Be Again." *Chicago Sun Times*, 29 April 1984, <http://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/john-hughes-when-youre-16-youre-more-serious-than-youll-ever-be-again>.

Ebert, Roger. "The Breakfast Club." *Chicago Sun Times*, 15 February 1985, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-breakfast-club-1985>

Ebert, Roger. "Martin and Candy Take the High Road in Hughes' Comedy." *Chicago Sun-Times*, 25 November 1987, 35.

Ebert, Roger. "Home Alone Reappraisal." *At The Movies*, Season 5, Episode 59, 2 February 1991.

Ebert, Roger. "Alone Again, Violently." *Chicago Sun-Times*, 20 November 1992, 43.

Eller, Claudia. "John Hughes signs deal with WB." *Daily Variety*, 1 July 1992, 3.

Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*. New York: Routledge, 1982.

Elsaesser, Thomas "Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment." in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, edited by Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, 27–44. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "The New Film History as Media Archaeology." *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies* 14, no. 2-3 (2004): 75–117.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Writing and Rewriting Film History: Terms of a Debate." *Cinema et Cie* 1 (Fall 2001): 24–33.

Evans, Gerard. "In the court of King Culkin." *Daily Mail*, 4 December 1992, 50.

Farr, Louise. "The Teeny Tales of Director John Hughes," *Palm Beach Daily News*, 3 October 1986, 6.

Federal Trade Commission, *Marketing Violent Entertainment to Children*, September 2000.

Fitzpatrick, Eileen. "Vid Stores Hedge 1st-Quarter Buying." *Billboard*, 25 February 1995, 10.

Fleming, Charles and Richard Natale. "Can Arnold terminate b.o. blahs?" *Variety*, 8 July 1991, 69.

Fleming, Charles. "A-list helmers healthy despite poor year." *Variety*, 25 March 1991, 109.

Fleming, Charles. "New plan to put Warners in Family way," *Variety*, 9 December 1991, 1.

Fleming, Charles. "Snackbar Slowdown Bitter Pill For Exhibs." *Variety*, 21 January 1991, 93.

Florence, Mari. "Dennis the Menace." *Boxoffice*, September 1993, R-65.

Florence, Mari. "Dutch," *Boxoffice*, September 1991, R-62.

Fox, David J. "Blockbuster Video Rates NC-17 Films Unsuitable for All." *Los Angeles Times*, 14 January 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-01-14/entertainment/ca-198_1_blockbuster-video.

Fox, David J. "Off-Centerpiece: Critics Start Your Reviews: John Hughes Talks About *Home Alone* the Sequel," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-04-07/entertainment/ca-121_1_john-hughes.

Fox, David J. "The Biggest News at ShoWest." *Los Angeles Times*, 9 February 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-02-09/entertainment/ca-637_1_hospitality-suites.

Franklin, B. J. "West Coast Week." *Screen International*. 28 November 1987, 10.

Frith, Simon. "Frankie Said: But What Did They Mean?" In *Consumption, Identity and Style: Marketing, Meanings and the Packaging of Pleasure*, edited by Alan Tomlinson, [page range]. London: Routledge, 1990.

Frith, Simon. "The Industrialisation of Popular Music (1987)." In *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*, edited by Simon Frith, 93–118. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Galbraith, Jane. "Reluctant Macy's Rains on New *Miracle on 34th Street*'s Parade." *Los Angeles Times*, 17 April 1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-04-17/entertainment/ca-47060_1_34th-street.

Gett, Steve. "Music, Movies Prove to be a Perfect Summer Pair." *Billboard*, 20 September 1986, 86.

Gett, Steve. "On the Beat: Short Takes I." *Billboard*, 9 August 1986, 31.

Gett, Steve. "Soundtrack Craze: Mixed Reviews." *Billboard*, 23 August 1986, 4.

Gibbs, Robert J. *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2012.

Giles, Jeff, with Charles Fleming. "See Kids' Flix Make Big Bucks." *Newsweek*, 28 June 1993, 66.

Giroux, Henry A. *Breaking In To The Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Gleiberman, Owen. "Bittersweet *Sixteen*: Burning the *Candles* at both ends." *Boston Phoenix*, 8 May 1984, C4.

Gleiberman, Owen. "Movie Review: *Curly Sue*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 8 November 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,316085,00.html>.

Gleiberman, Owen. "Movie Review: *Dutch*," *Entertainment Weekly*, 26 July 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,314918,00.html>

Gleiberman, Owen. "*Home Alone 2: Lost In New York*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 27 November 1992, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,312494,00.html>.

Gold, Richard. "U.S. overscreened? Not for mega-hits." *Variety*, 28 January 1991, 60.

Goldstein, Patrick. "Big Deals." *Los Angeles Times*, 17 January 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-01-17/entertainment/ca-36447_1_hughes-music.

Goldstein, Patrick. "John Hughes in the Pink at MCA." *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-03-01/entertainment/ca-6707_1_john-hughes.

Goodman, Fred. "How One Michigan Dealer Does His Best To Stand Out: Wagenaar's Aggressive Promotions." *Billboard*, 31 August 1985, 35.

Goodwin, Andrew. *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Gora, Susannah. *You Couldn't Ignore Me If You Tried: The Brat Pack, John Hughes and Their Impact on a Generation*, New York: Crown, 2010.

Gorman, Paul. "Hughes links with Fox in seven-feature slate." *Screen International*, 19 April 1991, 6.

Grainge, Paul. "Nostalgia and Style in Retro America: Moods, Modes and Media Recycling." *The Journal of American Culture* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 27–34.

Grainge, Paul. *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Green, Tom. "'92 at the movies: Hopes high that sequels pay it again," *USA Today*, 10 January 1992, 1D.

Greenberg, Joshua. "Universal Signs Hughes to 3-year pact," *Variety*, 2 May 1984, 19.

Greenberg, Joshua M. *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.

Greene, Doyle. *Teens, TV and Tunes: The Manufacturing of American Adolescent Culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012.

Greene, Ray. "Curly Sue." *Boxoffice*, December 1991, R-92.

Greenfield, Jeff. "He's Chevy Chase and You're Not, And He's TV's Hot New Comedy Star." *New York*, 22 December 1975,
<http://nymag.com/arts/tv/profiles/48252/index1.html>.

Grein, Paul. "April Brings Certifications Shower." *Billboard*, 10 May 1986, 91

Grein, Paul. "Chart Beat." *Billboard*, 10 May 1986, 6.

Grein, Paul. "Chart Beat." *Billboard*, 20 April 1985, 6;¹

Grimes, William. "Home Alone 2: Sequel Success? Or Pow! Splat!" *New York Times*, November 15, 1992, H15, H20.

Grimes, William. "Reviewing the NC-17 Film Rating." *New York Times*, 30 November 1992, C11.

William Grimes, "Ned Tanen, movie executive with a taste for youth films, dies at 77," *New York Times*, 8 January 2009,
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/08/movies/08tanen.html?_r=0

Grimsley, Kristin Downey. "Who's Got Some Presents of Mind?: Retailers Find Themselves Plumb Out of This Year's Hottest Christmas Gifts." *Washington Post*, 21 December 1993, D1.

Guins, Raiford. "Concrete and Clay: The Life and Afterlife of E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial for the Atari 2600," *Design and Culture* 1, no. 3 (2009): 345–364.

Guins, Raiford. *Edited Clean Version: Technology and the Culture of Control*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Gunning, Tom. "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3/4 (1986), 70.

Ham, William. "Straight Outta Sherman [sic]" *Lollipop.com*, 2003. Online: <http://www.lollipop.com/issue47/47-02-03.html>

Hanson, Patricia, and Steve Hanson. "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation." *Screen International*, 9 December 1989, 43.

Harbidge, Lesley. "Audienceship and (Non)Laughter in the Stand-up Comedy of Steve Martin." *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 8, no. 2 (November 2011): 128–144.

Harbord, Janet. *Film Cultures*. London: SAGE, 2002.

Hark, Ina Rae. "Fear of Flying: Yuppie critique and the buddy-road movie in the 1980s." In *The Road Movie Book*, edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, 204–231. London: Routledge, 1997.

Harmetz, Aljean. "How Summer's Films Ranked at the Box Office." *New York Times*, 8 September 1986, C17.

Harmetz, Aljean. "After *E.T.* They're 'chosen people' at Universal." *New York Times*, 25 August 1982, C17.

Harmetz, Aljean. "Frank Mancuso Named Chairman of Paramount." *New York Times*, 13 September 1984, C17.

Harmetz, Aljean. "Frank Price Named to Head MCA's Universal Studio." *New York Times*, 12 November 1983, 28.

Harmetz, Aljean. "Tanen to Head Paramount Film Unit." *New York Times*, 9 October 1984, C14.

Harmetz, Aljean. "Striking Writers Clash Over New Contract Offer." *New York Times*, 22 June 1988, C26.

Harmetz, Aljean. "Writers Ratify Contract, Ending Longest Strike." *New York Times*, August 8, 1988, C15.

Harrington, Richard. "On the Right Sound Track." *The Washington Post*, 25 February 1987, B7.

Hartigan, John. "Unpopular Culture: The Case of 'White Trash.'" *Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (1997): 316–343.

Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*. Revised edition, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1987.

Healy, Michelle. "Shelves are bare of these hot toys." *USA Today*, 9 December 1994, 1D.

Henderson, Scott. "Youth Excess and the Musical Moment." In *Film's Musical Moments*, edited by Ian Conrich and Estella Tincknell, 146–157. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

Herbst, Peggy. "Chicago-based Film Offices Battle Neighbourhood Burn-Out." *Backstage*, 22 August 1986, 47.

Hillier, Jim. *The New Hollywood*. London: Studio Vista, 1993.

Hinson, Hal. "Planes, Trains and Automobiles." *The Washington Post*, 25 November 1987, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/planestrainsandautomobilesrhinson_a0c920.htm

Holden, Stephen. "Kidnappers, Bad. Baby, Good. And Fearless." *New York Times*, 1 July 1994, C3.

Holden, Stephen. "Movie Music Spices a Variety of Scenarios." *New York Times*, 6 April 1986, H6.

Holt, Jennifer. "In Deregulation We Trust: The Synergy of Politics and Industry in Reagan-Era Hollywood." *Film Quarterly* 55, No. 2 (Winter 2001): 22–29.

Horovitz, Bruce. "New Twist in Tie-Ins: *Home Alone 2* May Redefine Merchandising." *Los Angeles Times*, 12 November 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-11-12/business/fi-433_1_merchandising-empire.

Hudson, Simon, David Hudson and John Peloza. "Meet the Parents: A Parents' Perspective on Product Placement in Children's Films." *Journal of Business Ethics* 80, no. 2 (2008): 289–304.

Hughes, John. *National Lampoon's Vacation*. Fourth Draft, 30 April 1982.

Hughes, John. Discussion and Q&A with AFI Fellows, *AFI Harold Lloyd Masters Seminars*, 1 May 1985, <http://www.afi.com/onscreen/pod/allpods.aspx>.

Hughes, John. *Pretty in Pink*, Fifth Draft, 9 May 1985.

Hughes, John. "Vacation '58 / Foreword '08." *All-Story*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2008): http://www.all-story.com/issues.cgi?action=show_story&story_id=389.

Hutchings, David. "Molly Ringwald Goes to the Head of the Teen Class with *Pretty In Pink*, but She'd Rather Play Grown-Up." *People*, 24 March 1986, 87.

Ilott, Terry. "Wary bankers keep Murdoch hanging." *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 131.

James, Caryn "Bite vs. Bark Or *Beethoven* Vs. *Ferngully*." *New York Times*, May 17, 1992, H22.

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," In *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on Postmodernism*, edited by Fredric Jameson, 1–20. London: Verso, 1998.

Jancovich, Mark. "The Best Place to See A Film: The blockbuster, the multiplex and contexts of consumption." In *Movie Blockbusters*, edited by Julian Stringer, 190–201. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Jenkins, Henry. *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Jenkins, Henry, and Kristine Brunovska Karnick. "Introduction: Funny Stories." In *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, edited by Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins, 1–14. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Jess-Cook, Carolyn. *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Jones, Jeffrey P. "With All Due Respect: Satirizing Presidents from *Saturday Night Live* to *Lil' Bush*." In *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era* edited by Jeffrey Jones and Ethan Thompson, 2009.

Kael, Pauline. "Sixteen Candles." *The New Yorker*, 28 May 1984, reprinted in Pauline Kael, *State of the Art: Film Writings 1983-1985*, 173–175.

Kael, Pauline. "The Breakfast Club." *Village Voice*, 8 April 1985.

Kamp, David. e-mail message from author. 18 February 2010.

Kamp, David. "Sweet Bard of Youth." *Vanity Fair*, March 2010,

Kehr, Dave. "John Candy Is Back In A Role Just His Size." *Chicago Tribune*, 16 August 1989, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-08-16/features/8901050071_1_john-hughes-jerry-lewis-particles

Kehr, Dave. "The Wizard: A Transparent Commercial." *Chicago Tribune*, 15 December 1989, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-12-15/entertainment/8903180211_1_wizard-nintendo-rain-man.

Kempley, Rita. "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation." *The Washington Post*, 1 December 1989, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/nationallampoonschristmasvacation.htm>

Kempley, Rita. "Dennis the Menace." *Washington Post*, 25 June 1993, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/dennisthemenancepgkempley_a0a396.htm

Kincaid, James R. *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998.

Kincheloe, Joe. "Home Alone and Bad to the Bone: The Advent of a Postmodern Childhood." In *Kinderculture*, edited by Shirley R. Steinberg and Joe L. Kincheloe, 31–52. Boulder: Westview, 1997.

Kinder, Marsha. *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

King, Geoff. *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2002.

King, Noel. "‘The Last Good Time We Ever Had’: Remembering the New Hollywood Cinema." In *The Last Great American Picture Show: Traditions, Transitions and Triumphs in 1970s Cinema*, edited by Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Howarth and Noel King, 19–36. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004.

Klady, Leonard. "Distributors need some late summer sizzle." *Variety*, 11 July 1994 – 17 July 1994, 1.

Klady, Leonard. "Sleepless Awakens to \$17 mil." *Daily Variety*, 28 June 1993, 1.

Klady, Leonard. "Summer Pix: Snaps, Crackles & Flops." *Variety*, 29 August 1994 – 4 September 1994, 1.

Klinger, Barbara. "Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture." *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 3–19.

Klinger, Barbara. *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Krämer, Peter. "Would You Take Your Child To See This Film? The Cultural and Social Work of the Family-Adventure Movie." In *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steve Neale and Murray Smith, 294–311. London: Routledge, 1998.

Krämer, Peter. "Clean, dependable slapstick: Comic Violence and the Emergence of Classical Hollywood Cinema." In *Violence and American Cinema*, edited by J. David Slocum, 103–116. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Krämer, Peter. "‘The Best Disney film Disney never made’: Children's Films and the family audience in American Cinema Since the 1960s." In *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, edited by Steve Neale, 185–200. London: BFI, 2002.

Krämer, Peter. "‘It’s aimed at kids - the kid in everybody’: George Lucas, Star Wars and Children's entertainment," in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, edited by Yvonne Tasker, 358–370. London: Routledge, 2004.

Krämer, Peter. *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars*. London: Wallflower, 2005.

Kristeva, Julia *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Krutnik, Frank "The Clown-Prints of Comedy." *Screen* 25, no. 4/5 (July–October 1984): 50–59.

Krutnik, Frank. "A Spanner in the Works? Genre, Narrative and the Hollywood Comedian." In *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, edited by Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins, 17–38. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Krutnik, Frank. *Hollywood Comedians: The Film Reader*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Krutnik, Frank. "Mutinies Wednesdays and Saturdays: Carnavalesque Comedy and the Marx Brothers." In *A Companion to Film Comedy*, edited by Andrew Horton and Joanna Rapf, 87–110. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Laski, Beth. "Miracle or money back." *Daily Variety*, 23 November 1994, 1.

Laski, Beth. "Miracle Refund Promo produces few takers. *Daily Variety*, 7 December 1994, 6.

Leaver, Adam. "A Different Take: Hollywood's Unresolved Business Model," *Review of International Political Economy* 17, No. 3, (August 2010): 454–480.

LeBeau, Vicky. "Daddy's Cinema: Femininity and Mass Spectatorship." *Screen* 33, no. 3 (1992): 244–258.

Lee, Christina. *Screening Generation X: The Politics and Popular Memory of Youth in Contemporary Cinema*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010.

Lewis, Jon. *The Road to Romance and Ruin*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Lewis, Jon. "Hollywood in the Corporate Era." In *The New American Cinema*, edited by Jon Lewis, 87–121. Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1998.

Lewis, Jon "The Perfect Money Machine(s): George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Auteurism in the New Hollywood." In *Looking Past the Screen: Case Studies in Film History and Method*, edited by Jon Lewis & Eric Smoodin, 61–86. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Liebman, Lisa. "The Gentle Art of Creating a Family Film." *New York Times*, 27 November 1994, H22.

Lindsey, Robert. "The New Tycoons of Hollywood." *New York Times*, 7 August 1977, SM4.

London, Michael (L.A. Times – Washington Post Syndicate). "Teen Movies Get Serious." *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, 17 November 1984, 6D.

Lyman, Rick. "Anthony Michael Hall as Geek: 'You gotta learn to like him'," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 June 1984.

Magiera, Marcy. "Grocers save aisle seat for videos." *Advertising Age*, 10 May 1993, 13.

Maltby, Richard. "New Cinema Histories." In *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, 3–40. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Maltby, Richard. "Nobody Knows Anything: post-classical historiography and consolidated entertainment." In *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steve Neale and Murray Smith, 21–44. London: Routledge, 1998.

Maltby, Richard. *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1983.

Maltby, Richard. *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Maslin, Janet. "16 Candles: A Teenage Comedy." *New York Times*, 4 May 1984, C14.

Maslin, Janet. "Sexism on Film: The Sequel," *New York Times*, 14 February 1988, H1.

Maslin, Janet. "On Vacation Once Again." *New York Times*, 1 December 1989, C12.

Maslin, Janet. "Alone Again: Holiday Mischief in Manhattan." *New York Times*, 20 November 1992, C1.

Mathews, Jack. (Los Angeles Times service), "Hughes may have arrived with *Planes*." *The Milwaukee Journal*, 18 December 1987, 3D.

McCormick, Moira. "VTR Plans More Seminars: Distributor Meeting with Dealers." *Billboard*, 21 September 1985, 34.

McCullaugh, Jim, and Paul Verna. "FoxVideo's *Home* Delivery Just in Time, Say Retailers." *Billboard*, 7 September 1991, 70.

McDonald, Paul. *Hollywood Stardom*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013.

McDonald, Tamar Jeffers. *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*. London: Wallflower, 2007.

McGowan, Chris. "Bright Connection for New Artists, New Music." *Billboard*, 21 June 1986, S-4.

McGowan, Chris. "Horror and Sci-Fi Video." *Billboard*, 4 October 1986, H-1.

McNary, Dave. "Universal ends half-price ticket experiment." *United Press International*, 9 April 1992. LexisNexis Academic.

McRobbie, Angela, and Jenny Garber. "Girls and Subcultures." In *Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen*, edited by Angela McRobbie, 1–15. Boston: Unwin Hyman: 1991.

Menell, Jeff. "Parent's Guide." *Entertainment Weekly*, 22 November 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,316241,00.html>.

Miller, Mark Crispin "Hollywood: The Ad." In *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, edited by Thomas Schatz, London: Routledge, 2004.

Miller, Stuart. "Ad Budgets For Vid Biz Put Into Fast Forward." *Variety*, 18 March 1991, 25.

Minsky, Terri. "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hughes." *Premiere*, July 1988.

Mitchell, Claudia, and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh. *Researching Children's Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Modleski, Tania. "Three Men and Baby M," *Camera Obscura* 6, no. 2 (1988), 68–81.

Moffat, Michael, "Do We Really Need 'Postmodernism to Understand *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*," *Cultural Anthropology* 5, no. 4 (November 1990), 367–373.

Moerk, Christian. "Family Volume at WB." *Daily Variety*, 14 May 1993, 3.

Moreton, Bethany. *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Moran, Kathleen and Michael Rogin. “‘What’s the matter with Capra?’: *Sullivan’s Travels and the Popular Front*.” *Representations*, No. 71 (Summer 2000): 106–134.

Morgan, Babette. “The Talk of Toyland: A Shortage of Talkboys has Santas Scrambling.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 19 December 1993, 1F.

Mosher, Jerry. “Penny Wise and Pound Foolish: Steve Martin and John Candy.” *Acting For America: Movie Stars of the 1980s*, edited by Robert Eberwein, 243–262. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010.

Murphy, A.D. “North American Theatrical Film Rental Market Shares: 1970-1990.” *Variety*, 14 January 1991, 12.

Murphy, A. D. “Ticket sales to fall to a 15-year low.” *Variety*, 15 December 1991, 5.

Musser, Charles. “Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema.” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 101–107.

MTV. “MTV Feature Presentation: *Pretty in Pink* Premiere Party.” 27 February 1986, <http://youtu.be/jcsVecWErGM>.

MTV. “John Hughes Musical Legacy.” 6 August 2009 [1986], <http://www.mtv.com/videos/movies/425382/john-hughes-musical-legacy.jhtml>

Nancarrow, Clive, and Pamela Nancarrow. “Hunting for Cool Tribes.” In *Consumer Tribes*, edited by Bernard Cova, Robert Kozinets and Avi Shankar, 136–142. Oxford: Elsevier, 2007.

Narine, Neil, and Sara M. Grimes. “The Turbulent Rise of the ‘Child Gamer’: Public Fears and Corporate Promises in Cinematic and Promotional Depictions of Children’s Digital Play.” *Communications, Culture & Critique*, 2 (2009): 319–338.

Nash, Melanie. “Introduction.” *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies* 14, no. 1 (2003): 7–19.

Natale, Richard. “Hollywood’s ‘new math’: Does it still add up?” *Variety*, 23 September 1991, 1.

Natale, Richard. "Hollywood's 'new math': Does it still add up?" *Variety*, 23 September 1991, 95.

Natale, Richard. "WB Pic Proves There's Life After First Week." *Variety*, 18 November 1991, 3, 5.

Nault, Curran. "The Cinematic Quiet Girl from *The Breakfast Club* to *Badlands*." *Feminist Media Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013): 303–320.

NBC5 Entertainment. "Bobbie Wyngat interviews John Hughes for *Sixteen Candles*." NBC5 KXAS-TV, 1984, <http://vimeo.com/15462712>.

Neale, Steve. "Melodrama and Tears." *Screen* 27, no. 6 (1986): 6–22.

Neale, Steve. "The Big Romance of Something Wild?: Romantic Comedy Today." *Screen* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 284–299.

Neale, Steve. *Genre and Hollywood*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Neale, Steve. "Hollywood Blockbusters: Historical Dimensions." In *Movie Blockbusters*, edited by Julian Stringer, 47–60. London: Routledge, 2003.

Neale, Steve. "'The last good time we ever had?': Revising the Hollywood Renaissance." In *Contemporary American Cinema*, edited by Linda Ruth Williams and Michael Hammond, 90–108. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005.

Neale, Steve, and Frank Krutnik. *Popular Film and Television Comedy*, London: Routledge, 1990.

Neale, Steve, and Sheldon Hall. *Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010.

Nelmes, Jill. *Introduction to Film Studies*, 3rd ed. London: Routledge, 2003.

New York Times. "Pretty in Pink." print advertisement, 5 March 1986, C12.

New York Times. "Pretty in Pink." print advertisement, 7 March 1986, C9.

New York Times. "Pretty in Pink." print advertisement, 9 March 1986, H15.

"Ferris Buellers Day Off," print advertisement, *New York Times*, 6 June 1986, C13.

New York Times. "Ferris Buellers Day Off." print advertisement, 29 June 1986, H10.

New York Times. "Ferris Buellers Day Off." print advertisement, 11 July 1986, C12.

Ng, Jenna. "The Myth of Total Cinephilia." *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 146–151.

Noble, Peter. "In confidence." *Screen International*, 25 October 1991, 8.

Noglows, Paul. "Bankers Bearing Down." *Variety*, 4 February 1991, 1.

Noglows, Paul. "Showbiz 1990: Days of Whines and Loses." *Variety*, 31 December 1990, 57.

Nowell, Richard. *Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Cycle*. New York: Continuum, 2011.

O'Connor, John J. "TV: Incongruities of Steve Martin." *New York Times*. 14 February 1980, C27.

Oswald, Laura. *Marketing Semiotics: Signs, Strategies and Brand Value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Ostrower, Francis. *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Paige, Earl. "Distributor Ignites *Sixteen Candles*." *Billboard*, 22 December 1984, 41.

Palmer, Jerry. *The Logic of the Absurd*. London: BFI, 1987.

Paramount Pictures. "Trailer for *Pretty in Pink*." 1986, <http://youtu.be/y-X5ixDLuhM>.

Paramount Pictures. "TV Trailer for *Pretty in Pink*," 1986, <http://youtu.be/tcSMDqXT52s>

Paramount Pictures, "TV spot for *Top Gun/Ferris Bueller*," Summer 1986, <http://youtu.be/HvYMZUBOMLY>

Paramount Pictures. "Handbook of Production Information: *Some Kind of Wonderful*." 1987.

Paramount Pictures. *Planes, Trains and Automobiles: Handbook of Production Information*, 1987.

Parisi, Paula. "Home 2 gets \$16 mil push from FoxVideo." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 16 April 1993. LexisNexis Academic.

Paul, William. *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Pond, Steve. "Interview with Molly Ringwald." *Elle*, October 1985,
<http://www.elle.com/cm/elle/images/01/ELLE-25th-anniversary-2-lgn.jpg>

Powrie, Phil. "Unfamiliar places: 'heterospection' and recent French films on children." *Screen* 46, no. 3 (2005): 341-352.

Portman, Jamie (Southam News Syndicate, Hollywood). "The very bankable Molly Ringwald." *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 February 1986, F6.

Prince, Stephen. "Introduction: Movies and the 1980s." In *American Cinema of the 1980s: Themes and Variations*, edited by Stephen Prince, 1-21. Oxford: Berg, 2007.

Prince, Stephen. *A New Post of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

PR Newswire, "Hughes to direct on *The Breakfast Club*," Universal City, CA, 28 March 1984. LexisNexis Academic

PR Newswire. "Hughes Signs to Paramount." New York, 21 March 1985. LexisNexis Academic.

PR Newswire. "John Hughes Returns to Universal Pictures." 20 April 1988. LexisNexis.

PR Newswire. "John Hughes to Produce Live-Action *Dennis the Menace* Feature For Warner Bros." July 18, 1991, LexisNexis.

PR Newswire. "Warner Bros. Announces Creation of Family Entertainment Label." 13 May 1993. LexisNexis.

PR Newswire (Vernon Hills, Illinois). "Tiger's Got '94's Hottest Toys Galore." 16 November 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

Rachlin, Jill. "Video Review: Only the Lonely." *Entertainment Weekly*, 29 November 1991, <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,316370,00.html>.

Reckard, E. Scott. "Warner Creates Family Entertainment Umbrella for Wholesome Fare." *Associated Press*, 13 May 1993, LexisNexis Academic.

Rohter, Larry. "How a 9-Year-Old Boy Rode A Dark Horse to Success." *New York Times*, 10 December 1990, C13.

Romano, Lois. "The Reliable Source." *Washington Post*, 23 November 1994, D3.

Rosenbaum, Jonathan. *Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Limit What Films We Can See*. London: Wallflower, 2002.

Rosenblum, Trudi Miller. "Suppliers Aim Kid Vids At Parents." *Billboard*, 25 June 1994, 43.

Ross, Steven J. "Jargon and the Crisis of Readability: Methodology, Language, and the Future of Film History." *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 130-133.

Rugh, Sussan Sessions. *Are We there Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008.

Salmans, Sandra. "Barry Diller's Latest Starring Role." *New York Times*, 28 August 1983, F9.

Frank Sanello (Newspaper Enterprise Association Syndicate), "Comedians go for ride in film," *Rome News Tribune* (Georgia), 4 December 1987, E12.

Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962." In *Film Culture Reader*, edited by P. Adams Sitney. New York: Praeger, 1970.

Sawyers, June. "Famous Faces Who Call Chicago Home." *Back Stage*, 24 May 1985, 10B.

Scharoun, Lisa. *American at the Mall: The Cultural Role of a Retail Utopia*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012.

Schatz, Thomas. *Old Hollywood/New Hollywood: Ritual, Art and Industry*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1982.

Schatz, Thomas. *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

Schickel, Richard. "Cinema: Chevy's Chase." *Time*, 31 July 1978,
<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,946947,00.html>

- Schwartz, Tony. "Hollywood's Hottest Stars." *New York*, 30 July 1984, 27–33.
- Schwartz, Tony. "Son of Hollywood's Hottest Stars." *New York*, 8 October 1984, 42-49.
- Schwartzbaum, Lisa. "Movie Review: *Baby's Day Out*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 15 July 1994, http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20609141_302916,00.html.
- Schwartzbaum, Lisa. "Movie Review: *Miracle on 34th Street*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 18 November 1994. Online: http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20609141_304493,00.html.
- Screen International*. "Chinich switches to Hughes Ent." 19 October 1985, 41B.
- Screen International*. "Directors." 11 December 1992, 22.
- Screen International*. "Hughes in deal with Paramount." 30 March 1985, 4.
- Segrave, Kerry. *Movies at Home: How Hollywood Came to Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999.
- Seidman, Steve. *Comedian Comedy: A Tradition in Hollywood Film*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981.
- Seidman, Tony "Newline." *Billboard*, 18 January 1986, 30.
- Seidman, Tony "Newline." *Billboard*, 20 July 1985, 32.
- Seidman, Tony. "Lennon Live is the First Music Title to Ship Gold." *Billboard*, 22 March 1986, 39.
- Seiter, Ellen. *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Seventeen*. "Molly Ringwald Interviews John Hughes." Spring 1986.
- Shandley, Robert R. *Hogan's Heroes*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011.
- Shahoda, Susan. "Illinois Feature Film Update." *Back Stage*, 20 February 1987, 55.
- Shary, Timothy. "Buying Me Love: 1980s Class-Clash Teen Romances." *Journal of Popular Culture* 44, no. 3, (2011): 563–582.

Shary, Timothy. "The Teen Film and Its Methods of Study." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 25, 1 (1997): 38–45.

Shary, Timothy. *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Shea, John. "Automobiles stars shift gears." *The Michigan Daily*, 2 December 1987, 7.

Sheffield, Skip. "Breakfast Club best film yet on teens," *Boca Raton News* (Florida), 19 February 1985, 1B.

Shelley, Fred M., Adrienne M. Proffer and Lisa DeChano. "Wal-Mart and Partisan Politics: From Agricultural Volatility to Red-State Culture." In *Wal-Mart World: The World's Biggest Corporation in the Global Economy*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn, 163–178. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Shimizu, Celine. *Straightjacket Sexualities: Unbinding Asian American Manhoods in the Movies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Sibler, Frederic. "Some Kind of Wonderful." *Fanfare* 10, no. 5, 256.

Siegel, Paul. "Product Placement and the Law." In *Handbook of Product Placement in the Mass Media: New Strategies in Marketing Theory, Practice, Trends and Ethics*, edited by Mary-Lou Galician, 89–99. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Silberg, Jon. "Baby's Day Out." *Boxoffice*, September 1994, R-61.

Silverman, Jeff. "5 for Breakfast: Young Club Stars Get Serious About Teens on Screen." *Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1985, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-02-17/entertainment/8501090892_1_emilio-estevez-laughing-round-table

Simmons, Matty. "Editorail." [sic] *National Lampoon*, July 1983, 6.

Simpson, Mark. "The Straight Men of Comedy." In *Because I Tell A Joke Or Two: Comedy, Politics and Social Difference*, edited by Stephen Wagg, 137–145. London: Routledge, 1998.

Siskel, Gene. "John Hughes Wakes Up to Needs of Teens With *Breakfast Club*." *Chicago Tribune*, 17 February 1985, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-02-17/entertainment/8501090893_1_sixteen-candles-writer-director-john-hughes-film.

Sklar, Robert. "Does Film History Need A Crisis?" *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 134–138.

Smith, Jeff. *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Music*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Smith, Murray. "Theses on the philosophy of Hollywood history." In *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, edited by Steve Neale and Murray Smith, 3–20. London: Routledge, 1998.

Smith, Russell. "Magazine Ranks Blockbuster Top Video-Rental retailer." *The Dallas Morning News*, 15 January 1993, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1993-01-15/features/9301030796_1_blockbuster-entertainment-west-coast-video-video-store

Smith, Sean M. "Teen Days That Shook The World." *Premiere*, December 1999.

Smoodin, Eric. "The History of Film History." In *Looking Past The Screen: Case Studies in American Film History and Method*, edited by Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin, 1–33. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Spector, Robert. *Category Killers: The Retail Revolution and Its Impact on Consumer Culture*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2005.

Spence, Sharon Lloyd. "Chicago Screenwriter Makes His Directorial Debut." *Back Stage*, 12 August 1983, 54.

Spillman, Susan. "John Hughes revives a Christmas *Miracle*." *USA Today*, 25 October, 1993, 4D.

Sowinska, Suzanne. "Class Clash in Brat Pack Films." *Off Our Backs: A Women's Newsjournal* 19, no. 9 (October 1989): 18.

Spigel, Lynn. *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

Springhall, John. "Censoring Hollywood: Youth, moral panic and crime/gangster movies of the 1930s," *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 3 (Winter 1998): 135–154.

Sragow, Michael. "Five Easy Pieces: Playing the *Breakfast Club* variations." *Boston Phoenix*, 19 February 1985, C4.

Staiger, Janet *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Staiger, Janet. "Authorship Approaches." In *Authorship and Film*, edited by David Gerstner and Janet Staiger, 27–57. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Staiger, Janet. "The Future of the Past." *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 126–129.

Staiger, Janet. "The Politics of Film Canons." *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1985), 4–23.

Stauth, Cameron. "Masters of the Deal." *American Film*, 1 May 1991, 30.

Steinberg, Shirley R., and Joe L. Kincheloe. "Privileged and Getting Away With It: The Cultural Studies of White, Middle-Class Youth." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 31, no. 1, (Spring 1998): 103–126.

Stenger, Josh. "Consuming the Planet: Planet Hollywood, Stars and the Global Consumer Culture." In *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, edited by Thomas Schatz, 346–366. London: Routledge, 2004.

Studlar, Gaylyn. *Precocious Charms: Stars Performing Girlhood in Classical Hollywood Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California, 2013.

Strauss, Bob. "Steve Martin and John Hughes: Director Graduates to the Adult World." *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 22, 1987.

Strauss, Neil. "Wal-Mart's CD Standards are changing pop music." *New York Times*, 12 November 1996, A1.

Susman, Carolyn. "Relax Mom: You Can Find That Hot Toy." *Palm Beach Post*, 29 November 1995, 1D.

Sutherland, Sam. "A&M Gives Green Light to *Pink* Campaign." *Billboard*, 15 February 1986, 4.

Sweeting, Paul. "Home Alone Is August 'Swell-Thru." *Billboard*, 18 May 1991, 85.

Tanenbaum, Rob. "The Sound of Money: Soundtracks Thrived in the Summer of '85." *Rolling Stone*, 21 November 1985, 17.

Thomas, Bob (Associated Press). "Film Director Much in Demand." *Kentucky New Era*, 19 August 1985, 9B.

Thompson, Anne. "Studios shifting to Mad Ave's savvy sell," *Variety*, 4 April 1991, 87.

Thompson, Kristin. *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Time. "The Nation: The Ridicule Problem." 5 January 1976, 33.

Traube, Elizabeth G. *Dreaming Identities: Class, Gender, and Generation in 1980s Hollywood Movies*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.

Travers, Peter. "The Great Outdoors." *People*, 4 July 1988,
<http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20099330,00.html>.

Tudor, Andrew. *Theories of Film*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1974.

Twentieth Century Fox. "Production Information: Baby's Day Out." 1994.

United Press International. "Fox offers *Miracle* guarantee." 22 November 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

de Valck, Marijke. 'Reflections on the Recent Cinephilia Debates,' *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 2 (Winter 2010).

Vare, Ethlie Ann. "Beyond Video: Media Flips for Clips." *Billboard*, 28 September 1985, NT10.¹ "MTV Programming: As of August 21, 1985," 31 August 1985, 52.

Vare, Ethlie Ann. "Oingo Boingo Aims for the Centre: Eclectic Troupe Moves to MCA." *Billboard*, 10 August, 1985, 36.

Vare, Ethlie Ann. "Simple Minds Tours For Human Rights." *Billboard*, 12 April 1986, 26.

Variety. "Sixteen Candles." 2 May 1984, 16.

Variety. "The Breakfast Club," 13 February 1985, 19.

Variety. "Ferris Bueller's Day Off: Airheads without a cause." 4 June 1986, 16.

Variety. "She's Having A Baby," 3 February 1988, 14.

Variety. "Uncle Buck." 16–22 August 1989, 21.

Variety. "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation." 8 December 1989, 32, 34.

Variety. "Vid Retailers Rate NC-17 at VSDA Confab." 28 January 1991, 30.

Variety. "Congressman wants descriptive ratings." 4 March 1991, 4.

Variety. "VCR Penetration Climbs to 76.6%." 13 May 1991, 45.

Vice, Sue. "Bahktin and Kristeva: Grotesque Body, Abject Self." In *Face to Face: Bahktin and Russia in the West*, edited by Carol Adlam, Rachel Falconer, Vitalii Maklin and Alastair Renfrew, 160–174. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

Video Week. "Foxvideo Lines Up 4 *Home Alone 2* Tie-Ins." 19 April 1993, 2.

Video Week. "Video Notes." 11 July 1994, 6.

Video Week. "Video Notes." 3 October 1994. LexisNexis Academic.

Vigoda, Arlene. "Rush's Turkey Day." *USA Today*, 23 November 1994, 1D.

Vogel, Harold. *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis*, 8th ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Warf, Barney and Thomas Chapman. "Cathedrals of Consumption: A Political Phenomenology of Wal-Mart." In *Wal-Mart World: The World's Biggest Corporation in the Global Economy*, ed. Stanley D. Brunn, 163–178. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Wasser, Frederick. *Veni, Vedi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Waterman, David. *Hollywood's Road to Riches*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Weaver, Sigourney. "Movie Comedians: The Virtues of Standing Apart." *New York Times*, 7 May 1989, H3.

Weintraub, Bernard. "Hollywood Is 'Testing Family Values' Value," *New York Times*, 12 November 1992, C15.

Whalley, Jim *Saturday Night Live, Hollywood Comedy, and American Culture*. London: Palgrave, 2010.

Wilkinson, Maryn. "The makeover and the malleable body in 1980s American teen film," *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, (Pre-Published online Spring 2014).

Williams, Eric. "Miracle on 34th Street." *Boxoffice*, January 1995, R-4.

Williams, Jean. "MCA Adds Three Labels in Accelerated Drive." *Billboard*, 21 July 1979, 3.

Willman, Chris. "Uncle Buck John Hughes' Valentine to Teenhood." *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-16/entertainment/ca-376_1_uncle-buck

Wilson, Pamela. "Stalking the Wild Evidence: Capturing Media History through Elusive and Ephemeral Archives." In *Convergence Media History*, edited by Janet Staiger and Sabine Hake, 182–191. London: Routledge, 2009.

Wood, Robin. "80s Hollywood: Dominant Tendencies." *CineAction!* 1 (Spring 1985): 2–5.

Philip Wuntch (Knight News Service), "Director John Hughes: 'Pied Piper of the Brat Pack.'" *Charlston Post and Courier*, 8 March 1986, 35.

Wyatt, Justin. *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Yandel, Gerry (Cox News Service). "Video Rental Chain Rates Films to Help Parents." *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star* (Virginia), TV-3.

Yarrow, Andrew L. "The Studios' Move on Theatres." *New York Times*, 25 December 1987, D1, D10.

Zia, Helen. *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

Zoglin, Richard. *Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009.