

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## Luxury content commerce collabs go to Hollywood

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*Louis Vuitton's Capucines handbag is a key accessory for Emma Stone's Cruella character on the big screen this summer. Image courtesy of Disney*

By Steven Ekstract

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A sure sign that the pandemic is winding down in the United States is the return of the summer movie box office season that kicks off with Memorial Day.

Last year, with the spread of COVID-19, many U.S. theaters remained shuttered, leading to major concerns in the industry that streaming video on demand would take over permanently. As a result, this summer's theatrical attendance is being watched closely, and brands will be featured prominently on the big screens.

### Disney's *Cruella*

One of the first franchise films to premier during the all-important summer season is *Cruella*, the origin tale of the villain from Disney's animated classic *101 Dalmatians*.

The film, which opened last weekend, follows a young grifter named Estella (Emma Stone), who is determined to make her mark in the 1970s London fashion-punk world and is transformed in the process. The film appeals to female audiences looking to get out for a fun, escape-filled night on the town after the past 15 months of staying in.

High fashion plays a central role in *Cruella*, and from a brand collaboration perspective, the film prominently features several luxury names such as [Louis Vuitton](#), [De Beers](#) jewelry and [Tom Davies](#) eyewear.

*Cruella's* signature accessory throughout the film is a Louis Vuitton Capucines bag, which ties to Ms. Stone's real-life role as a brand ambassador for the French fashion house.

De Beers is another luxury brand that appears in *Cruella*, which marks its first time partnering on a Disney movie.

The diamond-focused jeweler provided several pieces for the production, including a five-line necklace and three-line earrings in white gold from the Arpeggia collection, as well as the Diamond Legends by De Beers Cupid necklace, which consists of two symmetrical lines of princess-cut diamonds by a row of marquise-shaped stones.

The De Beers component of the campaign features a custom ad spot for the United States and United Kingdom

markets and social media.

## Space Jam: A New Legacy

What happens when you create a Hollywood film sequel that combines great music, comedy, nostalgia, beloved animation, sports, cyberspace, gaming and a basketball superstar? Answer: *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, the much-anticipated summer 2021 Hollywood movie blockbuster and ultimate vehicle for brand collaborations.

The film offers a case study for how Hollywood develops content to drive commerce: by creating great entertainment.

With more than 200 brands involved among them many fashion names from Nike to Tommy Hilfiger *Space Jam: A New Legacy* will offer a merchandising bonanza of products for consumers ready to spend.



*Expect to see much "Tune Squad" merchandise taking over stores this summer. Image courtesy WarnerMedia*

Slated to open in U.S. cinemas July 16, *Space Jam: A New Legacy* could not arrive at a more opportune moment for both Hollywood and a public that is ready to get back to normal life after a devastating global pandemic.

Most Hollywood observers believe the film has the potential to earn \$1 billion in global box office revenue, a welcome respite for a movie theater business devastated by the pandemic. And just as important to those of us in collabs, the film is an example of how Hollywood works with brands to develop unique content with a blockbuster created from a mashup of brand collaborations.

WarnerMedia, the film's producer, has taken its own original brand IP in the form of Looney Tunes and partnered with basketball icon Lebron James to make a hugely entertaining comedy for all ages.

### Timing and revival

It has been 25 years since the original *Space Jam* film debuted an original and delightful mashup of a legendary sports figure, beloved animated characters, comedy and hit music ("I Believe I Can Fly" by R. Kelly).

For WarnerMedia, the release of *Space Jam: A New Legacy* could not come at a better time, with potential nostalgia appeal across generations: The young adults and their children that saw the original are now grandparents and parents with kids of their own who can enjoy the film together.

Numerous fashion brands across categories from streetwear and fast fashion to watches and jewelry have *Space Jam* collaborations in the works, among them H&M, Torrid, Forever 21, MeUndies, Gap, Hot Topic and Stance.

### The OG

The original *Space Jam* made \$230 million in global theatrical revenue and \$1 billion in licensed brand collab merchandise.

Of course, when it comes to brand-celebrity partnerships, basketball legend Michael Jordan, star of the original movie, is arguably the most successful of all time.

Mr. Jordan's Nike Air Jordan sneakers, introduced in 1985, helped build the sneaker brand into the powerhouse it is today and has earned Jordan \$1.4 billion in royalties to date, according to *Forbes*. It also has the historic distinction of contributing to a sneaker culture that has become a top source of inspiration for brand collabs.

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