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Life's little luxuries for prized pets in the pink

DOGGED DEVOTION

Toy dogs have inspired a host of dinky accessories and some inspired flights of fancy. **Sharon Dale** reports.

WHEN Paris Hilton made the toy dog a must-have accessory, she helped spawn a whole new industry.

The pocket-size pooches now have their own designer fashions, carry bags and even luxury beds. But as every dog lover knows, man's best friend would much rather sleep on a proper bed snuggled up next to his or her owner.

That's why entrepreneurial ex-model Jessica Biltoft has come up with an idea that appears to be barking mad, but is, in fact, an ingenious solution to a common problem. Her highly embellished miniature flights of stairs were born out of sleepless nights with her vertically challenged "diva girls" - Chihuahua Boosie and Shih Tzu Honeybear.

Jessica, 22, who lives near Masham, says: "We have other dogs, including terriers and a Rottweiler called May, but these little dogs are different. They are like babies. They follow you round everywhere.

"I let them sleep on the bed but every time they heard a noise in the middle of the night they'd jump off, and because they're so small, they couldn't get back on the bed again, so they'd be pawing and crying.

"I'd be waking up at all hours lifting them back on the bed. That's when I decided to make them their own flight of stairs up to the bed. It worked treat. The dogs took to them straight away."

The steps are manufactured by a local furniture makers, while Jessica sands, paints and decorates them.

The range, which starts at £395, includes Divas Only - pink

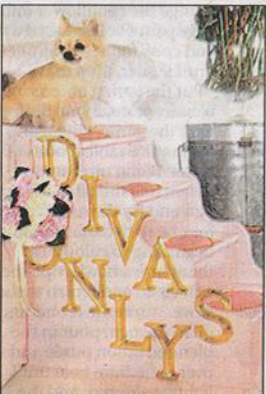
with silk dupion hearts, gilded letters and Swarovski crystals; Pimps in the Crib painted coral with zebra printed cowhide, Tribute to a Legend in blue bearing the Marilyn Monroe quotation: "What do I wear in bed? Why Chanel No 5 of course." And River Swale with toile de jouty carpet and miniature stair rods.

She is selling her stairs through her company Bear and Boosie and is hoping that at Harrods, Selfridges and Harvey Nichols will stock them - with next step, Beverly Hills.

"The quality is superb and they're a fabulous piece of furniture in their own right," says Jessica, who is the daughter of Rosebud



JUMP TO IT: Doggie jumper, £23.50, from Puchi petwear.



GOING UP: Divas Only, £395, decorated with dupion silk hearts and Swarovski crystals.



CREATURE COMFORTS: Jessica with Chihuahua Boosie and Shih Tzu Honeybear.

Preserves founder Elspeth Biltoft. She is also hoping to branch into other miniature doggie accessories including bags. "Despite what people think when they see these dogs in clothes or in a bag, they love it," she says.

"They like being dressed up and carried around with you. "But I've looked at what's out there and I'm not impressed with the quality of the products, so I'm hoping to design and manufacture some fabulous and outrageous new ranges with the emphasis on quality."

Canine fashion and accessories have boomed over the past few years with companies like Ikea creating departments dedicated to everything from cushions to dog tents and specialist firms like Puchi creating doggie parka coats and even bone shaped birthday cakes.

But while people have always loved their pets and even treated them to little presents, they completely lose their hearts to teeny weeny toy dogs, according to Jessica.

"They may start out as fashion accessories, but they soon become part of the family in a way a big dog never would.

"They want to be with you all the time, and the feeling's mutual."

■ www.bearandboosie.com Tel: 01765 688889

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