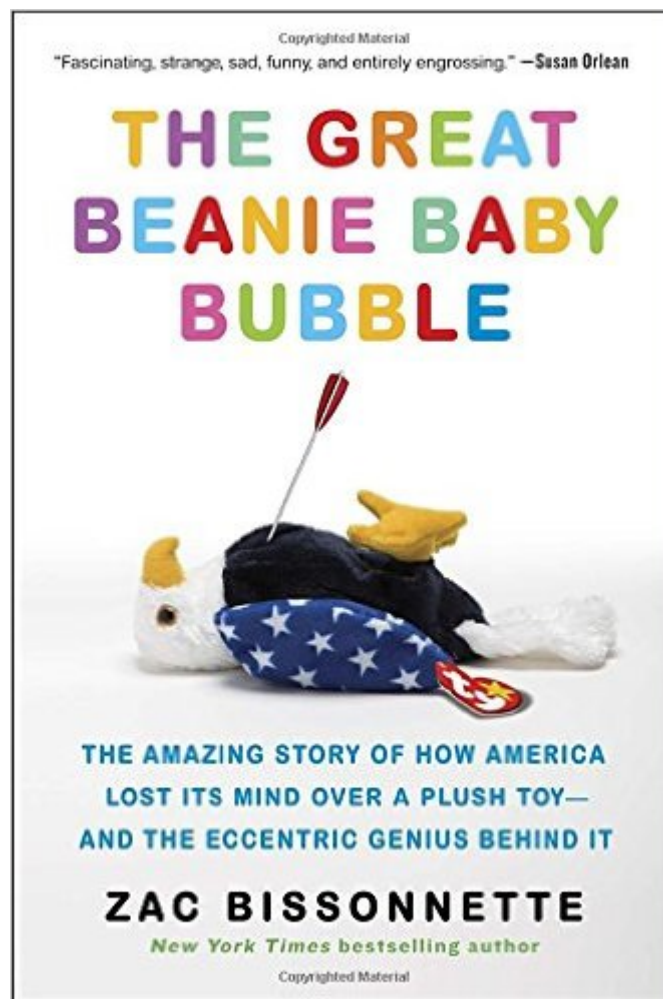


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The Great Beanie Baby Bubble: The Amazing Story Of How America Lost Its Mind Over A Plush Toy--and The Eccentric Genius Behind It



Synopsis

In the annals of consumer crazes, nothing compares to Beanie Babies. With no advertising or big-box distribution, creator Ty Warner - an eccentric college dropout - became a billionaire in just three years. And it was all thanks to collectors. The end of the craze was just as swift and extremely devastating, with "rare" Beanie Babies deemed worthless as quickly as they'd once been deemed priceless. Bissonnette draws on hundreds of interviews (including a visit to a man who lives with his 40,000 Ty products and an in-prison interview with a guy who killed a coworker over a Beanie Baby debt) for the first book on the most extraordinary craze of the 1990s.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ostensibly, this is the story of the strange period of time between 1996 and 1999 when adults turned a child's toy into currency, but it is just as much an examination of the nature of a fad and the people who create them. Beanie Babies were plush stuffed animals which had the then-unique characteristic of being understuffed and filled in key places with pellets which made them easy to pose. Available in a variety of colors and animal characters, the toys were slow to pick up interest. That lag time gave the toy company's founder, Ty Warner, time to tweak his models, which resulted in certain toys changing color or other attributes (e.g., spots and mouths). The fact that Warner insisted on his products being sold in small venues like gift shops and specialty toy shops and eschewed big box retailers like Toys 'R Us and Wal-Mart meant that when his toys did become popular there was a built-in scarcity. That made it a logical fit as a secondary market collectible (as

much as anyone can apply the word "logic" to collectibles). Ty Warner was (is?) a highly-focused businessman who obsessed over the tiniest details of his creations. He, like many other successful entrepreneurs, also had a finely honed gut feel for what worked for his audience. It's not a surprise that someone with his skills could create a high-quality toy that would appeal to children and adults alike. But Warner's story is only part of what made Beanie Babies a cultural phenomenon; the "early adopters" in the Chicago-area were the ones who not only evangelized the toys but also created and then reinforced the idea of "rare editions" and first started treating the toys like a kind of currency.

'The Great Beanie Baby Bubble: Mass Delusion and the Dark Side of Cute' by N.Y. Times bestselling author Zac Bissonnette chronicles the astonishing rise and fall of America's beloved Ty plush toys; which is often compared to the Dutch Tulip craze of the 17th century in 1637. For those who don't have a Beanie Baby story of their own; Bissonnette recalls this shocking speculative frenzy that began largely in 1997 where excited collectors from all walks of life began selling the plush animals averaging \$20.00-\$35.00. With books, magazines, articles, etc. predicting prices to only increase, collectors "chasing the Beanie's", hunting, going from store to store, an entire active collector/fan base took off! At the peak of the frenzy one Beanie sold for \$10,000 on eBay! Beanie Babies were manufactured in China, and the owner and founder Ty Warner (Ty Inc.) either limited production or retired certain coveted toys. Millions of dollars in orders went unfilled, the toys were marketed to limited retail stores, and favored smaller gift shops. Commercial toy companies like Mattel and Hasbro tried in vain to do business with Ty Inc. Business calls, letters, agents spending hours waiting, were ignored. McDonalds was granted brief sale promotion in 'Happy Meals' which only added to the demand. Lawsuits were enormous, Ty Inc. sued over 30 companies per year for copying anything that even resembled his plush toys. Sadly, individual citizens and small Mom and Pop business fell under scrutiny. Fortunes were made and lost by the time the 'Beanie Baby Bubble' was over by the year 2000. Bissonnette writes a fascinating biographical portrait of Ty Warner, the creator and multi-millionaire tycoon of Ty Inc.

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