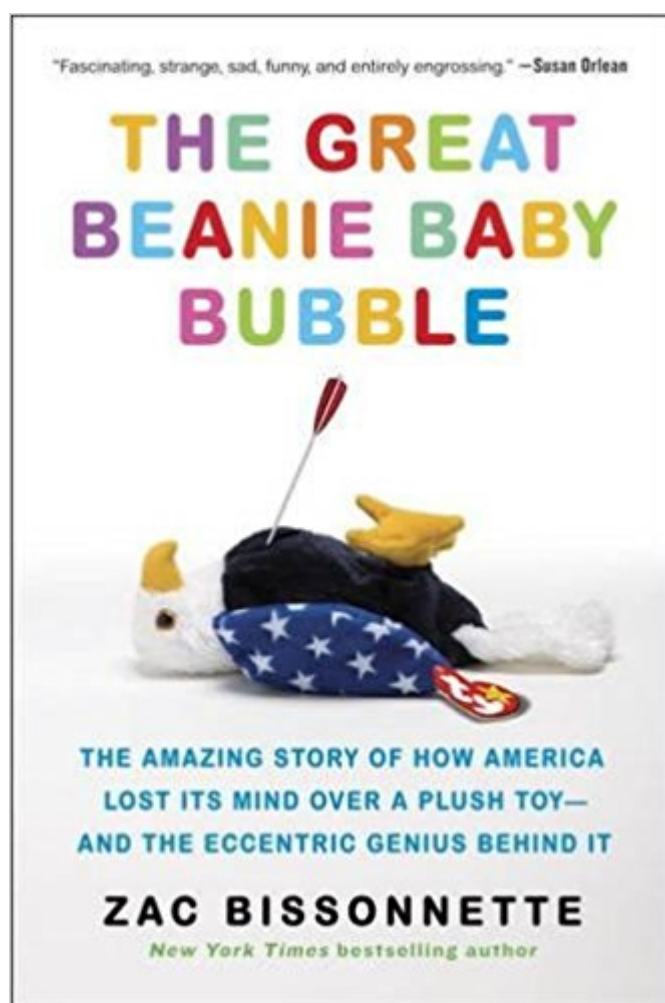


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The Great Beanie Baby Bubble: The Amazing Story Of How America Lost Its Mind Over A Plush Toy--and The Eccentric Genius Behind It



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 - become 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

“Enlightening.” He writes fluently and has structured his tale artfully. Most impressive of all, Mr. Bissonnette refuses to gratuitously trumpet his story as an emblematic critique of American culture, human folly or entrepreneurial greed—though of course it is all that and more. • The Wall Street Journal “Thanks to Bissonnette’s balanced and thorough reporting, the account of Ty Warner, founder of the Babies, becomes a portrait of a creator obsessed with perfection, making money in a business he loved, in a company built on his dreams. • Booklist “Bissonnette offers a crisp, investigative and presumably unauthorized biography of creator Ty Warner, 70, and a look at the rise of Beanie Babies and their swiftly ensuing three-year consumer craze... A spicy portrait of a taciturn toy magnate made entertaining with sensationalistic testimonial. • Kirkus

Reviews

“Equally heartwarming and heartbreaking, this accessible work will captivate.”

• Library Journal, Starred review

“Bissonnette (Debt-Free U) does a masterful job of tracing the rise and fall of the Beanie Baby phenomenon of the 1990s . . .

This cautionary tale of elevated consumerism, with collectors fretting over what they didn’t have rather than taking pleasure in what they did, serves as a useful history lesson for today, told with wit and subtlety.”

• Publishers Weekly

“The spectacular story of the strangest speculative bubble there ever was and the man behind it. A must-read for anyone looking to understand how manias start and markets go insane.”

• LIAQUAT AHAMED, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Lords of Finance*

“Fascinating, strange, sad, funny, and entirely engrossing,” *The Great Beanie Baby Bubble* is a smart, engaging book that’s as much about the odd saga of these plush toys as it is about the nature of obsession and desire.”

• SUSAN ORLEAN, author of *Rin Tin Tin*

“In spare, elegant prose, Zac Bissonnette tells the riveting story of how Ty Warner ruthlessly built Beanie Babies into a mania as misguided and regrettable as the 1637 Dutch tulip craze and mortgage-backed securities in 2008. You won’t be able to put this book down.”

• WILLIAM D. COHAN, author of *Money and Power*

“The amazing story of the time the world lost its mind over little beanbag critters named Punchers, Humphrey, and Wingless Quackers. Zac Bissonnette takes us on a journey into the secretive world of the man behind the mania, Ty Warner.”

• BILL DEDMAN, coauthor of the bestselling biography *Empty Mansions*

From the Hardcover edition.

Zac Bissonnette wrote two acclaimed bestsellers before his twenty-fourth birthday: *Debt-Free U* and *How to Be Richer, Smarter, and Better-Looking Than Your Parents*. He has contributed to the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Boston Globe Magazine*, the *Daily Beast*, and *Bloomberg*, among others. He lives in New York City.

This is an excellently researched book detailing the history of Beanie Babies, the unique events that led to the Beanie Baby craze, and the inevitable bust as beanie babies worth hundreds or even thousands of dollars became worthless in a span of a few weeks. The author interviews many important players. The book gives an extensive biography on Ty Warner, the man who created Beanie Babies, and details how his eccentricities and perfectionism helped launch the beanie baby craze. The book talks about the brothers who first gave Ty the idea of "retiring" Beanie Babies, the college student who developed the first Beanie Babies website and wrote the first poems for Beanie

Babies, the original collectors who spread the Beanie Baby craze by their calling all over the country & even the world looking for Beanie Babies, and many other tidbits on people who collected Beanie Babies, people who lost all their money on Beanie Babies, and people who worked for or with Ty Warner. Ty Warner's then girlfriend Faith gave the author extensive information on Ty Warner and the inside history of Beanie Babies. The author talks about the history of collections and fads, the unique factors that all came together to cause the Beanie Baby craze, and what caused the end of the craze and the crash of the Beanie Baby market (and why such collecting crazes are unlikely to happen in an internet age.) There is even an interview with one of the few people who still meticulously collect Beanie Babies. This book will provide fascinating reading both for people who were caught up in the craze, and for people like me who were dumbfounded at the time by the craze.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Zac Bissonette put in the time and research to make this an engaging and thoroughly engrossing book on the rise and fall of Ty Warner's widely successful line of "Beanie Products." Complete with many personal interviews of those close to Ty and those greatly affected by it (Collector's, Small Specialty Owners, and more), it makes very interesting and worthwhile look at those who made millions and crashed hard when it all came to a screeching halt. We also get to see the man behind the Beanies, in a biographical sketch pre-Beanie and (less so) post-Beanie. The only caveat I had, was that it seems to be written especially for those in business (hence "Bubble"), yet it is still completely accessible to the average reader. If you ever had an interest in how people thought that children's products were a "good investment plan" or Beanies helped create eBay (and why eBay helped bring it all to an end), then get this book. If not, you might as well get it anyway if you want something interesting to read that gives a glimpse into some human psychology, some business, and when a toy becomes a commodity over a children's plaything.

Witnessing the mania during its heyday was confusing to me. Adults buying cute little stuffed toys as an investment strategy made no sense. I could understand a few rare items being of value but we're talking millions of these suckers being hoarded by people. Mr. Bissonette's 'The Great Beanie Baby Bubble' does a very good job of explaining how the toy became a fad then turned into insanity. The book is not only a dissection of the phenomenon but also an explanation of how rational people are lured into a quirky greed-fueled social event. There is much to be learned from this quick-reading work. The author describes the creator, Ty Warner, and his obsession with making and marketing the ultimate stuffed animal. Everybody has idiosyncrasies but Warner makes most of us look like

rookie eccentrics. A self-absorbed skinflint who was an exceptional good salesman and workaholic kept rewriting his rise to success. Mr. Bissonnette separates fact from fiction. Warner's story is not as he portrayed due solely to his actions. There was a lot of serendipity involved. The book explains how the craze first began in a Chicago suburb, the key players in the fad's rise, and the Beanie Babies inevitable fall. The author also inserts many colorful stories about the Beanie Baby acolytes. Some of the topics covered are such things as the gimmick of retiring certain Beanie Babies, the birth of e-commerce, eBay, copyright infringement, knock-offs, the farce of price guides, the partnership with McDonald's, a rundown of where many of the players are now in their lives, and most importantly, the nature of economic bubbles. The book also includes 8 pages of photos. Beyond the compelling story, Mr. Bissonnette gives the readers a cautionary tale about the attraction of get-rich schemes. In my lifetime there have been two housing bubbles, the baseball-card bubble, the dot-com bubble, the Beanie Baby bubble, and numerous fads that people have lost their ever-lovin' gourd over such as Cabbage Patch Kids, Furbies, and Yu-Gi-Oh trading cards. As long as humans exist, these greed-induced follies will occasionally appear. 'The Great Beanie Baby Bubble' may help you be better prepared for whatever insanity is down the marketing road.

Interesting and insightful investigation of the Beanie Baby craze. Filled with stories of both the inventor as well as collectors and others who cashed in on the phenom. Well written, keeps your attention, and makes you wonder how a \$5.00 plush toy could rule the toy world for 3 years and then come crashing down as fast. Will keep your attention from the first to the last page. Highly recommend even if you missed the craze.

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