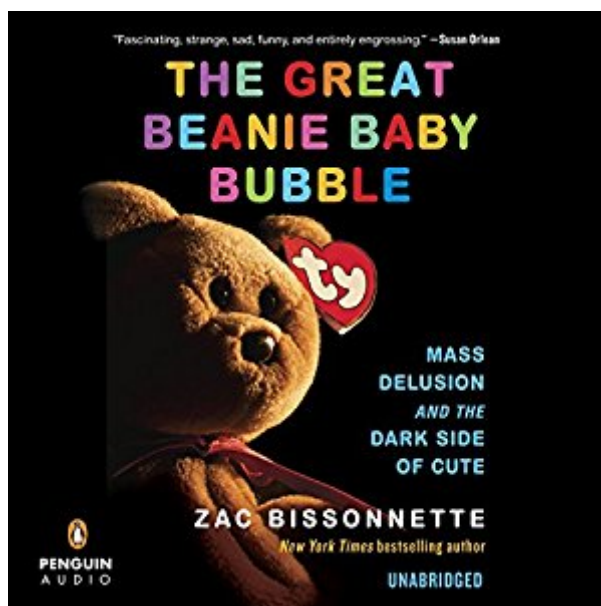


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The Great Beanie Baby Bubble: Mass Delusion And The Dark Side Of Cute



Synopsis

There has never been a craze like Beanie Babies. The \$5 beanbag animals with names like Seaweed the Otter and Gigi the Poodle drove millions of Americans into a greed-fueled frenzy as they chased the rarest Beanie Babies, whose values escalated weekly in the late 1990s. A single Beanie Baby sold for \$10,000, and on eBay the animals comprised 10 percent of all sales. Suburban moms stalked UPS trucks to get the latest models, a retired soap opera star lost his kids' six-figure college funds investing in them, and a New Jersey father sold three million copies of a self-published price guide that predicted what each animal would be worth in 10 years. More than any other consumer good in history, Beanie Babies were carried to the height of success by a collective belief that their values would always rise. Just as strange as the mass hysteria was the man behind it. From the day he started in the toy industry, after dropping out of college, Ty Warner devoted all his energy to creating what he hoped would be the most perfect stuffed animals the world had ever seen. Sometimes called the "Steve Jobs of plush" by his employees, he obsessed over every detail of every animal. He had no marketing budget and no connections, but he had something more valuable - an intuitive grasp of human psychology that would make him the richest man in the history of toys. Through first-ever interviews with former Ty Inc. employees, Warner's sister, and the two ex-girlfriends who were by his side as he achieved the American dream, *The Great Beanie Baby Bubble* tells the inspiring yet tragic story of one of America's most enigmatic self-made tycoons. Best-selling author Zac Bissonnette uncovers Warner's highly original approach to product development, sales, and marketing that enabled the acquisition of plush animals to activate the same endorphins chased by stock speculators and gamblers.

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Customer Reviews

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 a 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. Bissonnette'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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