

Monday • February 9, 1998

## Beanie Baby on Board

### Students take on hobby of collecting tiny, but valuable stuffed toys

By BRANDI BALLARD  
Staff writer

They are lovable, huggable and the chase is half the fun of having one. It is the Beanie Babies bandwagon, and if you are not on it, you are way behind.

Created by Ty Warner, owner of Ty, Inc., the Brookfield, Illinois-based toy company, Beanie Babies have begun to take the nation's love.

Ty, Inc. has specialized in stuffed animals for years. Developed in 1993, Beanie Babies were intended to be a toy children could buy with their own money.

In a press release, Ty, Inc. describes Beanie Babies as "pocket-sized, non-violent, non-computerized, gender natural, affordable stuffed animals that introduce a huge sampling of the world's animals to children, encourage compassion and education."

Compassion for these tiny creatures is exactly what they got. It came not from children, but from their parents. Grown-ups (although when it comes to Beanie Babies often do not act like it) have been spotted fighting over Beanie Babies,

harassing UPS men and even breaking into cars. All this is for a bunch of beans wrapped in some material at a wholesale cost of \$2.50.

Kathy Pilgrim, owner of Treasures Gift Shop, said she has had customers become irate because they did not get the one they wanted.

"It is like an addiction to some people," Pilgrim said.

"Some people are so serious they wrap them in plastic bags and put tag protectors on them before they leave the store."

The original nine Beanie Babies (Splash, Flash, Legs, Patti, Pinchers, Squealer, Cubby, Chocolate and Spot) found their way to the marketplace in 1994. What many considered to be a short-lived fad has suddenly sprung into the hottest collectibles of today.

Every month, Pilgrim said she thinks the toys will fizzle out and she will be stuck with 3,000 Beanie Babies nobody wants. But she has not seen a decline in interest yet.

Keta Jones, owner of Keta's Hallmark in Post Oak Mall, said she agrees.

"We get 200 to 300 phone calls a day asking about Beanie Babies," she said. "This is just a

crazy deal."

What is it about these animals that make them so popular? Jones thinks it might be the way they retire and become more valuable.

"I think the tags with their name and a little poem make them collectible," she said.

Pilgrim said she believes it has to do with the reasonable price.

"They are cute," she said. "They all have the cutest faces."

Ty, Inc. only permits stores to place one order a month.

"And we can only order 36 maximum of one piece," Jones said. "Their shipments usually come once a month; of course they always have back orders, and sometimes they will receive them."

"We have a list of people we are to call when we get new Beanie Babies in," Pilgrim said.

"The problem is when you only get 36 of a piece and there are 2,000 people on the list to call. We try to be fair and call different ones."

In October 1996, Forbes magazine estimated Ty, Inc. would sell 100 million Beanie Babies that year alone. In 1997, sales ran 10 times those of 1996, and in 1996, sales ran 10 times as great as 1995.

To date, Ty, Inc. has retired some of the Beanie Babies and introduces new designs twice a year.

Retired Beanie Babies have been rumored to sell for \$2,000. For example, Quackers, the duck produced in 1994, had no wings. Today, it is estimated to be worth \$1,800.

Jones said most people are into Beanie Babies because they are a collector's item and that their children do not even get to play with them.

"They buy tag protectors to put on them," Jones said. "Without the red-heart tag, it's not worth anything."

Pilgrim thinks the most popular Beanie Babies today are the purple Princess Di and Peace the Bear. Although they are not retired, they are in limited supply.

"It really does not matter which ones we receive," Jones said, "they are all gone within two to three days."

It seems the Beanie-Babies bonanza only has just begun.

You had better run to your favorite gift shop; they can not be found at any old toy store. But be prepared to put up a good fight — looks like this could be a dangerous sporting event.

### The Replacement Killers

Starring Chow Yun-Fat and Mira Sorvino

Directed by Antoine Fuqua

Rated R

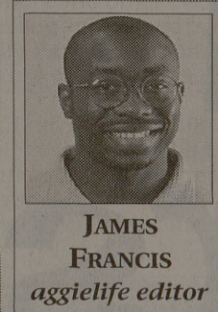
Playing at Hollywood 16

Critique: B+

## Flashback

### The Legend of Billie Jean

## Reel CRITIQUE



JAMES FRANCIS  
aggIELife editor

Critics always feel they have the right to declare a film new and innovative when they recognize the slightest difference between the film being discussed and one that falls under the same genre. In the case of *The Replacement Killers*, those critics might be on the right path with their thinking.

With the help of director Antoine Fuqua, the man behind rap-sensation Coolio's "Gangsta's Paradise" music video; Chow Yun-Fat, internationally-known Asian actor; Mira Sorvino, Academy Award winner for her tour de force performance in Woody Allen's *Mighty Aphrodite*; and John Woo, stylistic director of *Face/Off*, *The Replacement Killers* enters a stage of filmmaking that has yet to be defined.

From the moment John Lee (Yun-Fat) enters a trendsetters' nightclub (the historic Mayan theater in downtown Los Angeles), the mood for the film lets one know he means business. The cameras track his every movement in slow motion as he slides through a bustling crowd of dancing clubgoers.

Lee takes the audience with him toward a table of what only could be a group of organized crime members, surrounded by a bunch of laughing women who obviously are not representatives

of Mary Kay Cosmetics.

Lee stops in front of the table, sets a single bullet on the tablecloth and then proceeds to gun down every man at the table and others who make an attempt on his life from corners of the club.

But this scene means nothing in the overall character development of Lee, who is a Chinese immigrant with the haunting past of being a professional killer. In exchange for his family's safety, Lee is made to take on three assassination jobs for a power-hungry underworld figure.

The beginning scene of the film represents his second hit, but it is when Lee is told to assassinate police detective Stan Zedkov (Michael Rooker), that he realizes he can not complete the job. It is simple to say when Lee scopes out Zedkov's house, he also sees a 7-year-old son and a loving wife, reminding him that his family is still in danger.

This is where the real story begins. Suddenly, Lee is in need of a passport to get back to his family before the underworld boss can order them assassinated. He calls on the help of a friend who refers him to small-time document forger Meg Coburn (Sorvino) to obtain a passport and other international papers.

During his visit, the underworld boss' hitmen break in and try to kill Lee and Coburn. Of course their attack was unsuccessful, or else the film would be short-lived.

PLEASE SEE *KILLERS* ON PAGE 4.

An attractive young woman takes to the streets to fight crime and social injustice.

No, it's not *The Adventures of Wonder Woman*. It's *The Legend of Billie Jean*, starring Helen Slater as the tough-as-polished nails heroine. Also making an appearance is a pre-pubescent Christian Slater as Billie Jean's little brother, Binks.

Both actors fail miserably at portraying believable Texas accents, and a half-baked storyline doesn't help matters.

If Helen Slater delivered her lines as well as she delivered a knee to the groin (a feat she accomplishes more than once), maybe *The Legend of Billie Jean* would be a little more tolerable.

— Rhonda Reinhart

*The Legend of Billie Jean* just might be the only movie in which the Texas accents are worse than the characters' wardrobes — acid-washed blue jeans and jean-jackets with the sleeves cut off.

The movie does feature a few interesting characters, including Yeadley Smith who does character voices on "The Simpsons." She has no actual role in the movie except to whine and follow Billie Jean everywhere she goes.

The film is a little unrealistic when an uproar is caused because of a misunderstanding.

It's not likely that Helen Slater, clad in Joan of Arc costume, would really lead the entire community of Corpus Christi in a chant of "Fair is fair!"

PLEASE SEE *BILLIE* ON PAGE 4.

**1st General Meeting**  
Hear Tim Cassidy  
Associate Athletic Director  
for Football Operations  
speak about recruiting and  
other football related topics  
Wednesday, Feb. 11  
@ 7:00 in MSC 226

**12th MAN STUDENT FOUNDATION**

Any Questions, Comments, or Suggestions?  
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- You must be a degree seeking student and have a total of 95 undergraduate credit hours reflected on the Texas A&M University Student Information Management System. (A passed course, which is repeated and passed, cannot count as additional credit hours.)
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If you are a May 1998 degree candidate and you do not have an Aggie ring from a prior degree, you may place an order after you meet the following requirements:

- Your degree is conferred and posted on the Texas A&M University Student Information Management System; and
- You are in good standing with the University, including no registration or transcript blocks for past due fees, loans, parking tickets, returned checks, etc.

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**Procedure To Order A Ring:**

- If you meet all of the above requirements and you wish to receive your ring on April 16, 1998, you must visit the Ring Office no later than Wednesday, February 11, 1998 between the hours of 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. to complete the application for eligibility verification.
- If your application is approved, you must return and pay in full by cash, check, money order, or your personal Discover, Visa or MasterCard (with your name imprinted) no later than Friday, February 13, 1998 between the hours of 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Men's 10K	\$321.00	14K	\$423.00
Women's 10K	\$199.00	14K	\$222.00

Add \$8.00 for Class of '96 or before.  
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