



and INXS, *The Beanie Bubble* is a '90s nostalgia-fest. Roller-skating is a thing. Dial-up modems are painfully slow. The rise of e-Bay facilitates a thriving Beanie Babies black market, driving prices sky high until – pop! – a combination of greed and overproduction bursts the bubble.

Taking their cues from Zac Bissonette's 2015 book *The Great Beanie Baby Bubble – Mass Delusion and the Dark Side of Cute*, co-directors Kristin Gore and Damian Kulash choose to focus on Warner's business partner Robbie (Elizabeth Banks), his girlfriend and mother-of-two Sheila (Sarah Snook) and Maya (Geraldine Viswanathan), the tech genius who hooked the toys to the internet boom. In so doing they interrogate the myth of the lone male genius as well as the female relationship to the American Dream, using artistic license, giving things a feminist twist.

"Even with the book it was tough to try and figure out who Ty was," says Galifianakis of the notoriously private Warner, 78, who bought Four Seasons Hotel New York with profits from Beanie Babies; controversially, the hotel has been closed since the Covid pandemic, leaving hundreds of employees out of work. "There is very little video of him. I think I was going off that greed-at-all-costs mentality which was prevalent in America in the '90s and still is.

"When the script came in I thought, 'God I wonder if I can do this'. And it turns out I can't."

He grins, shifts in his seat. "You know, I used to be a busboy in the restaurant at the Four Seasons but I couldn't take the clientele. I quit after a week."

That was around the time he moved to New York City to study acting, having majored in communications at college in North Carolina, with a side-hustle doing stand-up comedy. Acting school wasn't for him: "Classes were like therapy sessions for a lot of people. I found it hard to keep a straight face. I was happy being a stand-up. It was an easy, fun life. But the acting roles kept coming in."

His comedy act partly involved noodling on a piano while delivering spoken offbeat observations: "Absurdist jokes with sad music," he remembers. "You can only do it for a few minutes at a time. But I still love playing piano even though I'm really not very good. I find it healing."

He joined *Saturday Night Live*, played live rock venues with a comedy ensemble, got bit parts in comedy films (in 1999's *Flushed* he's listed as "Pathetic Guy").

The *Hangover* – in which he played another eccentric man-child – was his breakout role. He's starred in music videos and TV shows, voiced characters on *The Simpsons* and the

Lego Batman Movie, won awards for his roles in 2014's *Birdman* and (2016 to 2019) FX series *Baskets* in which he plays twin brothers. He is Left-leaning, socially conscious (in 2015 he bought an apartment for a homeless octogenarian woman who was living in a Santa Monica laundromat) and keen to lavish praise on his co-stars, particularly the Australian ones (including Snook).

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"There's no ego, which is so refreshing. And the sense of humour is stellar. I'm like, 'Man, what are they doing in Australia?'"

Galifianakis is now one of America's most prolific contemporary funnymen. But fame and celebrity were never the goals.

"I remember getting together with my dad's family as a kid and watching my older cousins do these very funny sketches and thinking 'I want to do that'. I loved the sound of people laughing. It motivated me."

"Entertaining people and making them laugh." He flashes a smile. "As simple as that sounds, that is all it is."

***The Beanie Bubble* streams on Apple TV+ on July 28.**

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