

Gotta have it

Toy crazes ensue once again

By JOY LUDWIG
Staff Reporter

Parents fighting over dolls in the toy aisle. People waiting hours in line hoping to buy that "must have" Christmas gift. The police even being called in to break up a fight.

The holiday craze over the latest gift has to be believed.

The holiday shopping madness started the day after Thanksgiving and will continue to keep retailers occupied until Christmas Eve, making it their

busiest season of the year.

Sesame Street is at it again, trying to tickle customers' fancy with a new plush, talking doll this Christmas season.

At local toy stores, employees are trying to keep their shelves stocked with the Sing & Snore Ernie, a doll that sings "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," but falls asleep in the middle of it and starts snoring. It seems as if the toy craze of last year's Tickle Me Elmo is making another comeback.

Kim Oltman, senior sales and seasonal employee at Shopko, 27th Street

and Highway 2, said as soon as they put the doll out on the shelves, shoppers snatch it up.

"We have three trucks coming a week with mostly toys, but they still go fast," she said.

Currently, Oltman said many people have rain checks for the doll.

Scott Pettit, employee at Toys R Us, 5220 N. 27th St., also said the Ernie doll was selling well at the store.

"What Elmo was last year, is basically what Sing & Snore Ernie is this year," he said.

Another big holiday craze involves Ty's infamous Beanie Babies.

Cathy Hiemer, owner of Teddy Bear Express & Gift Baskets Galore, 237 S. 70th St., said selling them at her store has been just "nuts."

"Three and a half years ago we were giving them away because no one knew about them," she said. "Now, adults have gone overboard."

Recently, she said she had as many as 60 to 100 phone calls from people wanting to know when more Beanie Babies would arrive. Now, she has an answering machine set up to handle these phone calls, but people have to call after 6 p.m.

In late October, Hiemer said she got a shipment of the new holiday beanies, "Teddy" the Christmas bear, a snowman named "Snowball," "Gobbles" the turkey, "Spinner" the spider, and "Batty" the bat. She allowed customers to buy one only of the new Beanies so more people could have a chance at buying one of them. She said people still waited in line for hours.

"Most people seemed to like that a lot better because they could at least have one of the new ones," she said.

During this shipment, she said she even had to call the police because two men were fighting outside of her store about their place in line.

Hiemer now has hired extra people to answer the phone and control how

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CATHY HIEMER

owne of Teddy Bear Express & Gift Baskets Galore

many people come through the door. She also has placed a sign on the door that says which Beanies she has and how many. However, she only allows people to buy a maximum of three Beanies in one style.

Although she said she does buy some of the Beanie Babies for herself and her three daughters, she doesn't understand why adults are behaving the way they are about them.

"People have to remember these are only Beanie Babies and that they were made for kids," Hiemer said. "It should be a fun thing. Instead it's just another Cabbage Patch doll or Tickle Me Elmo craze that has lasted a bit longer."

On a quieter note, another talking toy is making his mark. The Real Talking Bubba, is a bear that speaks when children squeeze its tummy or push on his feet. Pettit said it almost sounds like Ross Perot's voice, but children seem to like it.

Other popular toys, he said, are virtual pets. The Nano Babies and GiGi Pets are small, electronic animals attached to a key chain that the children have to take care of, clean, and feed through a game. If they don't, the game starts over, he said. These small pets cost from \$13-\$15.

"Little kids just go crazy about the virtual pets," he said.

The re-release of Walt Disney's "Little Mermaid" and Fox's new movie, "Anastasia," have brought on an onslaught of dolls and other movie-influenced products to toy stores as well. "The Lost World" toys such as the

command center have been big hits, too.

Pettit said video games are still popular, especially for Sony's Playstation and Nintendo 64. But this year has introduced new games such as Nintendo's "Diddy Kong Racing" and Sony's "Final Fantasy VII" and he expects them to be big sellers.

Besides video games, computer software games offer a similar form of entertainment, said Jeff Eliasson, software department supervisor at Best Buy, 400 N. 48th St. The adventure game, "Riven," which is the sequel to "Myst," Microsoft's Flight Simulator '98 and all sport games are most popular. He said the store doesn't have "Quake 2" yet, but when the game comes in he expects it to be a big seller.

Also gaining popularity is Sprint's PCS digital phone, said Phil Prusa, sales manager at Radio Shack in Gateway Mall. Although the phone's clarity is better than a cellular phone, he said, it does not cover as wide an area because there are only a few towers so far. And, the phone does cost more than cellular phones.

Only three varieties are offered right now: Sony's for \$200 with a 48-hour battery, Samsung's for \$150 and a \$50 rebate with a 20-hour battery and a dual-band phone that works outside the basic coverage area for \$250.

Although not a new item, Prusa said he also has been selling quite a few remote-controlled cars. They range in sizes and prices, starting at \$20 and going up to \$200 for the larger models.

Happy Holidays!
Good Luck on Finals!

Twice the week before finals and all through the street, students were hungry and wanting to eat. The books were all opened in the carrels with care in hopes that the Bamba man soon would be there. The students were restless from a long night out, while visions of burritos danced all about.

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Student gifts a clothes call

By REBECCA HYDE
Staff Reporter

American Eagle, Structure, the Gap, Dillard's, Younkers, Banana Republic and Abercrombie & Fitch are stores students say they love to shop in, but can't always afford.

Fortunately, during the holiday season shoppers pack the malls trying to satisfy everyone on their list. Clothes are a common gift idea, but some fashions are standing out from the rest in 1997.

Wide-legged jeans and corduroys, wool sweaters, ski and snowflake prints, and snow boarder-inspired clothing are just a few of the hot items this holiday season, according to managers at Abercrombie & Fitch, Banana Republic and the Gap.

"There is this really nice sweater at American Eagle that I want; it has a ski pattern. It was around \$40-\$50. I also want a scarf, hat and gloves with a ski pattern," said Michelle Kiefel, a freshman business management major.

Matt Somers, store manager at Abercrombie & Fitch in Omaha, said cardigans with zippers, ski caps and cargo pants are in style. He also said clothes and accessories, or anything with stripes, are selling well.

"Anything wide leg is the thing, especially jeans and cords. Any type of wool sweater, especially ones with a large stripe or band around the chest or along the bottom is hot," Somers said.

Karli Newman, store manager at the Gap in Omaha, agreed. The Gap is offering a boiled wool sweater, a wool V-neck and a lambswool sweater with a snowflake print this season, with prices ranging from \$38-\$48. Newman said that woman's fashion is getting dressier, and velvet is a popular fabric this year.

Julie Telley and Stacy Lundeen, assistant managers at Banana Republic in Omaha said that in women's clothing, fabrics are getting more interesting this season. Velvets and velour, moleskin, a suede cotton that feels like felt, and stretch fabrics are filling up the store. They said the items they anticipate will sell the

fastest are any of their wool V-neck sweaters, their stretch suiting pieces, and their men's sueded crew, a soft brushed cotton sweatshirt without a banded bottom.

Newman said at the Gap, a complete casual outfit including pants, a shirt or sweater and an undershirt will cost about \$100.

An outfit at Banana Republic, including jeans, a sueded crew, belt and socks will cost about \$139-\$142.

At Abercrombie & Fitch, sweaters cost about \$50-\$90, jeans and cords are \$50 and carpenter pants are \$60. For some less expensive gift ideas, Abercrombie has hats, ski caps and boxers for \$25 and less.

When students were asked what kind of clothing they wanted for the holidays, fashion didn't always dictate their tastes. Price discouraged some from buying clothing from many popular retail stores and some placed a greater emphasis on comfort.

"I just want some sweat shirts and jeans because they're comfortable," said Jennifer Hansen, a freshman math and history major.