

PICTURE
OUT
OF
THE
BLUE

BLUE
MAGAZINE
TAKES
ON
THE
WORLD

Co-founded by legendary designer David Carson, *blue* is a magazine with a fresh design approach, and an open attitude as to the kinds of stories it covers. Picture explores what it has to offer.

In an issue of *blue* magazine devoted to the search for the perfect wave, amid articles about tow-in surfing, and the best waves in El Salvador, there is an article and four-page photo essay about the conflict in Kosovo. A surprising venue for such an article, perhaps, but surprise is what *blue* is all about.

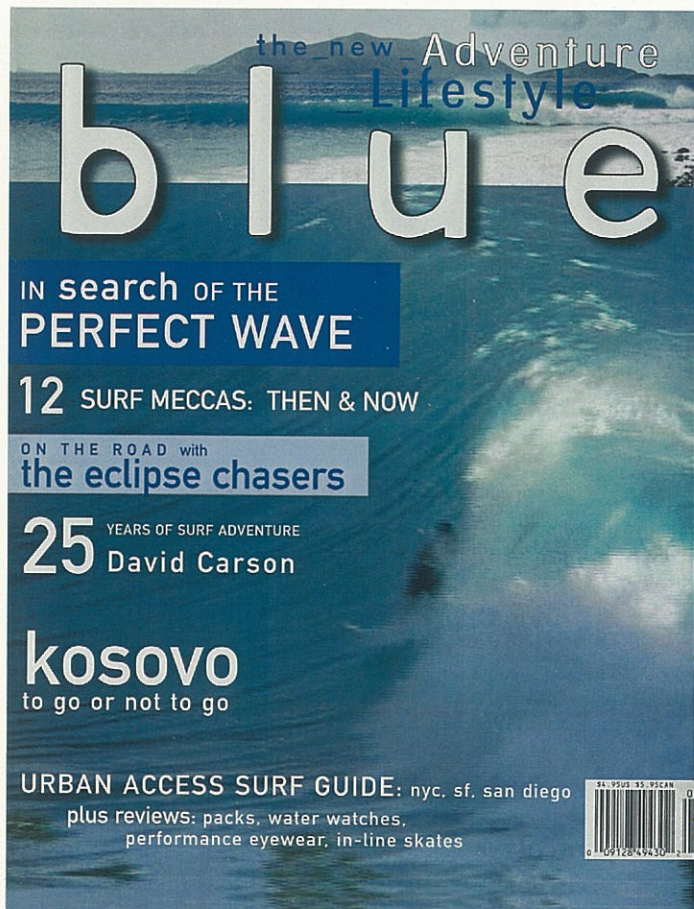
Billed as "The Adventure Lifestyle" magazine, *blue* is a mix of articles on recreational activities such as surfing, skateboarding, and rock-climbing in locations around the world, and stories on environmental, social and political issues. It is a bold stance for the young start-up magazine, and one that seems to be working. The magazine, which was first published in July 1997, has so far received a very positive response, including a *Life* magazine award for Cover of the Year for their launch cover. The magazine's design is bold and bright, making it hard to tell where the content ends and the advertising begins. David Carson, former Art Director of *Ray Gun* magazine and one of the country's leading graphic designers, co-founded *blue* and helped to establish the overall look and feel. There are no text-to-picture ratios, and no rigid guidelines about the artistic content, beyond the fact that the editors look for

evocative and inspiring images that "communicate an inspirational sense of place or experience," says founder Amy Schrier.

"At the time we started *blue*, photographically speaking, the only magazines that really communicated the energy and excitement of a sport were surf magazines or snowboard magazines or skateboard magazines," says Schrier, who is also the magazine's editor-in-chief. "If you went to an established travel magazine or an outdoor magazine, you never felt what it feels like to actually go trekking through China. We wanted the pages of the magazine to captivate how exciting that is."

In fact, Schrier does not describe *blue* as a travel magazine at all, but says that it takes traveling one step further. Travel, she says, is usually defined as a vacation, specifically an organized vacation. What *blue* covers is a lifestyle of discovering the world through outdoor recreation. Schrier describes it as "a whole point of view, of exploring the world and being part of a global community. And since *blue* is about seeing the world - literally seeing the world - it places a huge emphasis on photography."

Articles in the magazine are often written in the first person and at times take quite an opinionated stance. The text for the piece about



the _new_ Adventure
_Lifestyle

blue



the africa issue

35 adventures

climbing kilimanjaro > surfing the skeleton coast
shark diving > sandboarding > safaris > and more

**DANGER TRAVEL +
AFRICAN WARZONES**

BY ROBERT YOUNG PELTON

fly fishing

the new progressive cool

by tim parr

plus >

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MOUNTAIN BIKING:

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11 >

the refugees from Kosovo was written by the photographer, Gary Fabiano. Writing the text was the most challenging part of the project, says Fabiano, because he found it difficult to remain wholly objective after funding his own visits to the region several times to report on the situation there.

After browsing through the magazine on numerous occasions, Fabiano approached the editors at *blue*. He was impressed with their debut cover, an image of a person about to dive from a height, which he says "graphically, was just brilliant." He showed them a portfolio of his work, including some photos he had taken in Albania of the situation in Kosovo. Having worked as a photographer for only four years, Fabiano says he is pleased he took his photos to *blue*.

"It's about trying to get into alternative venues. If I were to be lucky enough to get my photos into *Life* I'd never have the spread I had [in *blue*]." He also says he would not have had the same amount of creative input, such as making sure his photos were not cropped, or the freedom that *blue* allowed him. The editors never told him what type of image they were looking for, so he was free to shoot the way he wanted. "You choose your images. I had pretty much full integrity over my pictures. Another good thing is we might have reached an audience who may not normally read *Time* magazine."

The audience for *blue* is in the 19- to 35- year old age bracket, and reaches both male and female readers equally. Letters to the editors show readers across North America and also in Europe and India. *Blue* publishes six issues a year, and each issue is generally devoted to one topic, such as 'The Climbing Issue,' or 'The Africa Issue.' Schrier says the approach to each article is different. Sometimes the text comes first and the challenge is to identify the appropriate photographs and other images to accompany the story. Other times, as was the case with Fabiano's piece, the photographs are what compel the story, and the text comes later.

For the first issue in 2000, the cover story evolved from a set of photographs shown to one of the senior editors. "We basically created the cover story, a whole photo essay on the experience of this person from seeing these photographs and knowing that they would so powerfully communicate what *blue* is about," says Schrier. She describes the photographs, taken by photographer Laurel Axen on a month-long surfing trip to Sri Lanka, as "some of the most breathtaking photo-

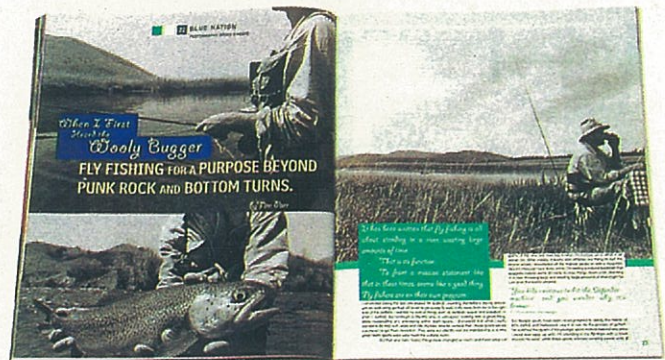
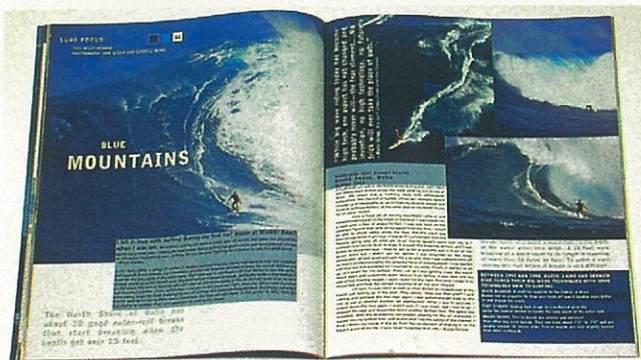
graphs we'd ever seen. They are nothing like surf photography."

Axen uses a darkroom technique on some of her photography to produce multiple images from a straight negative. When she returned from her trip, she showed the editors at *blue* a selection of her photos, some which were straight travel shots, and others which used the multiple-image technique. "I wanted them to choose the multiple-images photos," she says, "but I thought they would go for the more conservative line. I admire that they would print these photos because they are not your traditional photos. They are not going to make most people run out and buy a surfboard and go to Sri Lanka." The shot chosen for the cover of *blue*'s next issue is a blurred image of a surfer, printed over a background of Sanskrit writing.

Axen describes her recent work as more dark and philosophical than typical travel photos. This, she says, is in part because of the incongruity of having the luxury to surf in a country that is still recovering from a recent civil war. "Other magazines like my straight imagery better. A lot of people like this imagery but they don't necessarily think they can advertise with it, or sell magazines with it. *Blue* is more liberal," she says. "Other travel magazines tend to want to publish something more like, 'oh go to the roti stand here or you'll find great surf here.' [*blue* was] actually interested in a more philosophical point of view which I thought was really incredible."

Editors at *blue* are always looking for work from new photographers and accept photographer portfolios for review. "The types of photographers we are looking for are generally ones with a passion for traveling and exploring the world," says Schrier. "That's got to be what it's all about. In the sense that, we see a lot of photographers who are shooting models and celebrities and things like that, and that's not where we are going to find the *blue* photographers of the future."

Photographers who have worked with the magazine say they are happy with their experiences. Fabiano warns that they are a smaller, newer publication so do not have the same sort of budget as a more established magazine, but the benefits of having creative control and freedom were worth it to him. He even knows an editor at *Life* magazine who teaches a class at the International Center for Photography and uses *blue* as an example for her students when they ask her how to get their work into *Time*, or how to shoot for *Life*. She shows them a copy of *blue* and tells them 'you're looking in the wrong place.' ■



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