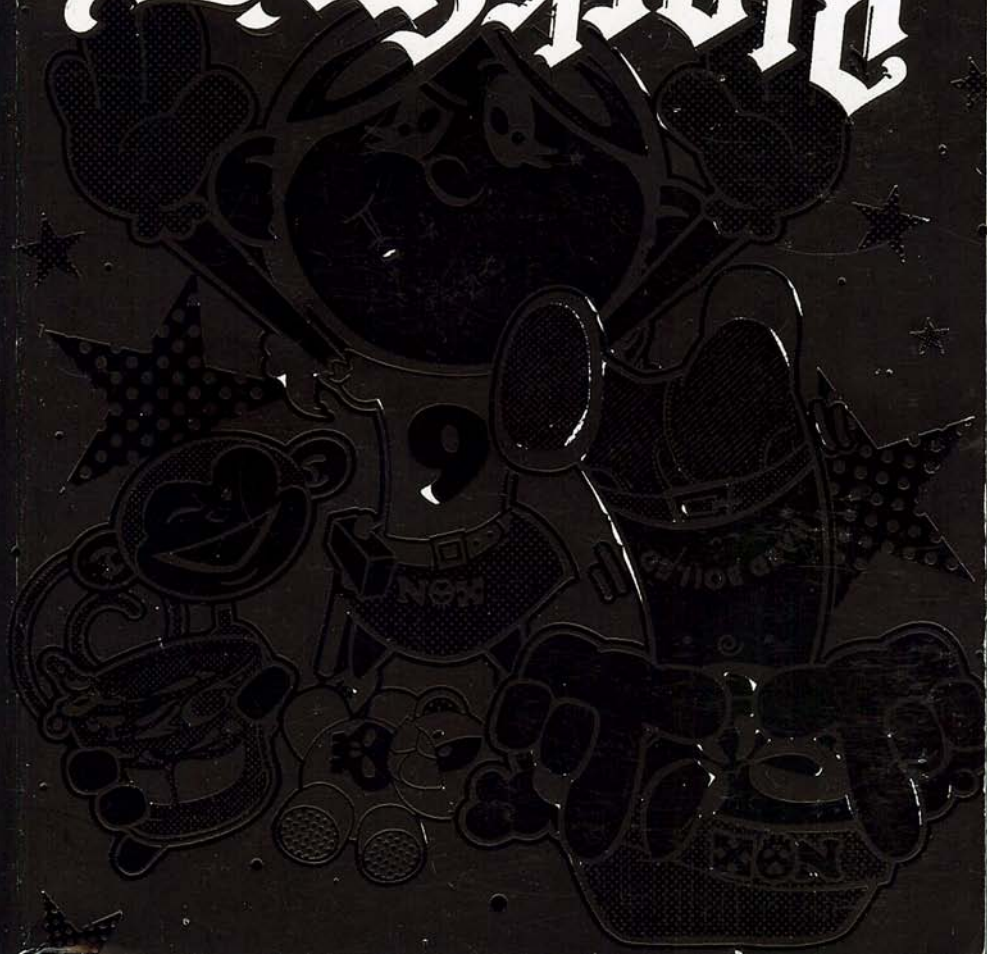


ROYAL

Black Spots





BEAUTIFUL/
DECAY

OF THE ARTS

Hands down the most overall improved magazine this year. Beautiful decay has always been a strong independent voice for Art, Design and Culture - but in the last 12 months - the physical book itself has become a sought after, stunning artifact for Mash Culture.

Technology has allowed brands to develop at unprecedented rates due to the instant access to highly targeted global consumer groups. Do you think that this has helped create stronger or weaker brands?

Technology had been a huge factor in the success of Beautiful/Decay. We couldn't do what we do without high speed internet. We would not have been able to build an internationally distributed magazine and a clothing line if we couldn't communicate between our offices in New York and Los Angeles. We also wouldn't be able to penetrate the global marketplace without our website, where we publish content (Anthology, News Feed), sell products, and communicate with the community of creative individuals who identify with the Beautiful/Decay brand. In our case it has helped create a strong brand, but technology also causes dilution of quality.

Now you can buy all the tools you need to record an album, publish a blog, build a website, edit a movie, etc. for a couple thousand dollars. This creates an atmosphere where less and less people are satisfied with being fans; everyone wants to create. Empowerment and inspiration aren't bad things, but if you don't have to truly be dedicated to a craft or culture to participate in it, it devalues the work of those who have. As a media outlet we are faced with the daunting task of trying to wade through every would-be artist/designer/musician who feels like they should create something just because they have the tools to do so, not because they are necessarily skilled or committed.

What do you think the effect of a super-saturated media landscape will be in the next ten years? How will it effects brands and various markets they target?

The internet has completely changed how people do business. Just in the last year we have seen a significant change in how companies brand themselves. It used to be corny or unprofessional to have a Myspace page. Now you see major record labels pushing their bands Myspace page. Larger corporations are starting to see how effective grassroots marketing can be. In ten years there might be even a bigger surge of alternative promotional outlets for brands such as more advanced blogs and interactive websites such as Myspace.

Brands will have to step up what they offer. You can't just be a run of the mill t shirt line with a outdated website. You will have to offer consumers a reason to visit your site and keep them there.

Do you think blog media makes it too easy for companies to market their brands? Does it take the challenge of out of marketing and ultimately design?

Brand loyalty is dead. If you don't consistently offer high quality/well designed products you will be left in the dust, for the most part. The exceptions to the rule are the blog-based brands. Many brands seem to create interest purely on what's posted on their blogs. It's an effective tool but has its drawbacks.

At a certain point there might be a backlash from consumers to all the new brands that are popping up with blogs. At the end



love me very much

CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP

OH H

STRIKE ANYWHERE

TV SHOW

SKWAK

TV RATING

KILL ALL THE WAGS

just keep my youth

SO LUTION

FUCK WITH PLUTO

FRIENDS WITH YOU

NOW IT'S THE REAL LIFE

SIM JOH

SKWAK COLORS

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At a certain point there might be a backlash from consumers to all the new brands that are popping up with blogs. At the end of the day you can't feature the same pair of Nikes on 100 different blogs and expect people to care. You have to give people some substance. Unfortunately a lot of blogs function more as teenage diaries rather than communicating anything intelligent or meaningful. I think in a few years consumers will be able to see through a lot of it.

Do blogs create a hyper competitive landscape for traditional media like print or radio? Or do they help legitimize these traditional media channels?

Blogs don't threaten traditional media channels, except in the case of actual news. When it comes to information about world events that truly effect our lives blogs are a powerful check against the media oligopoly but when it comes to pop/consumer/lifes



tyle media it doesn't stand on its own.

To "traditional" media outlets and even well-established commercial websites a blog is a tool that is easily integrated to compliment its other content.

Humans have the need to hold something tangible in their hands. That is why people collect our magazine. People don't do this because the images aren't available on the web. They collect them because they like the idea of sitting down on a couch or a desk and physically flipping through the pages.

Intelligent brands will offer the public several options. Most publications these days have a print and web component. That definitely is the case for Beautiful/Decay. In the last 5 years we have slowly built our web presence to a point where we get close to 50,000 unique visitors a month. Many of

these people are also avid fans of the print publication. I don't think many of them choose one over the other.

As an independent media outlet, what roll do you personally see yourself playing in the development of your target culture?

Beautiful/Decay's goal since the very start has been to document the convergence of emerging art, design, fashion, and music. Over the last 10 years we have transformed from a black and white photo-copy zine to a internationally distributed publication that has repeatedly broken fresh artists and designers before they were the talk of the town. We have carved out a niche for ourselves in the marketplace, by creating a product that appeals to a community that didn't have a forum until we developed it.



Just look at our advertisers to see the difference. Many of the galleries, record labels, and apparel companies that advertise with us don't have a big marketing plan that involves multiple media channels. They create advertising directly for our publication and readership. In each issue you can find ads from leading museums such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art right next to ads by some new clothing line that is about to release their first line. You won't find that in many books these days.

You can also see the same pattern in our subscribers. Just the other day we got a new batch of subscription cards and were shocked to find such a wide range in reader ages. On the same day we had a 15 year old, a 35 year old and a 57 year old subscribing. To us that is absolutely amazing. Being able to break down age barriers while maintaining your original focus is powerful and we're very lucky to be able to have that

sort of appeal.

As our brand grows and matures we are hoping to branch off into different creative ventures, like Beautiful/Decay Apparel, our artist t-shirt line that we recently launched. With this project we are able to collaborate with many of the artist that we have featured in the past to create a premium tee shirt line with a emphasis on the creativity and quality that our readers have come to expect from Beautiful/Decay.

What are the greatest challenges you face being an independent media outlet?

Like any other publications we face the dilemma of large printing costs. Publishing a magazine is not cheap. Many people have the idea that the publishing game is fun and easy. That is the furthest thing from the truth.

We have struggled long and hard to stay true to our mission and not bend to the pressure of being simply a marketing vehicle or glorified catalog. It has taken the last 5 years to make people understand that we are truly doing something different. It is a risky proposition to create a magazine that doesn't neatly fit into the categories that ad agencies create. You run the risk of just being another "fringe book". It would be real easy to feature every company who has a marketing budget, because that is a pretty persuasive pitch when selling ads, but we have employed a different tact. We have consistently produced a quality product with or without huge corporations. Because we don't rely on them we have slowly started to make larger companies and agencies understand that they need us if they want to communicate with the demographic we have developed.

How do you feel about New Corp. buying Myspace? Is a good sign that "Big Media" is beginning to see the benefit of new forms of organic media? Or do you see it as just another over-inflated deal fuel by fear or ignorance?

News Corp's purchase of Myspace is a blatant move to capitalize on a vast network of individuals who have voluntarily explained their likes/dislikes, ethnicity, age, marital status, education, etc. It's like a living breathing mega-focus group. It is the ultimate advertising tool. For better or worse they grant you "free" space to create a PROFILE for yourself in return they have gained huge insight on how to more effectively sell you products and generate ad revenue. Some think this is a good thing, but you can't ignore examples like Yahoo's assistance in the arrest of Chinese dissidents or the ever-present justification of the supposed "War on Terror" as an excuse to invade the privacy that we thought the Constitution protected.

I hate these types of questions - but who do you think is pushing things to the next level? (media wise)

As far as print media goes we really respect what Lisa at Bidoun magazine is doing. She is truly filling a much needed gap and helping expose creative middle eastern designers, artists, and thinkers. Youtube.com is changing how people relate to and access video. Google has created new paradigms for accessing information and selling products. Apple has changed the way we think about accessing music and now TV/video.

Who is NOT doing it right? (I am sure most of you are too politically correct to start some media beef... but GOD I would love to hear someone go off about something juicy.

There are plenty of brands out there that are lacking. Most publications have turned into vehicles for selling product. The substance is traded in for fluff material in order to satisfy advertisers. This problem isn't just the publications faults but it also lays in the hands of advertisers. Many brands that advertise still think that more is more. They just want to shove their products down peoples throat. That theory may work in the mainstream but it doesn't seem to be effective to the niche tastemaker demographics. Taste-makers love discovering brands and products on their own.

Moving onto something more specific about the content we cover... where do you see the Global Street Culture market headed?

There will be some backlash from consumers. It's inevitable. The best way for brands to protect themselves from this is by putting out a superior quality product that has lasting power. The brands that will last are the one's that actually have a clear vision and plan. Because the blog has created a channel for creating buzz so easily every Tom, Dick and Harry thinks they can create a successful brand because they know its easy to draw the attention. The buzz can only last so long if the design isn't inspired and the quality isn't high. **R**