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**Digital newsstand
gets new Vice**



ATOMIC RANCH BRINGS IT HOME FOR READERS

BY TARA MCMEEKIN EDITOR



When Atomic Ranch launched in spring 2004, husband/wife team Jim Brown and Michelle Gringeri-Brown could only dream of the level of success the publication — devoted to mid-century American Homes — might enjoy.

Fast forward to 2012, and the quarterly has a readership of approximately 100,000 — with the majority of subscribers paying full price.

“We don’t have any half-price promotions or mass give-aways,” said Gringeri-Brown, who serves as editor. “I think we have a pretty motivated group of readers.”

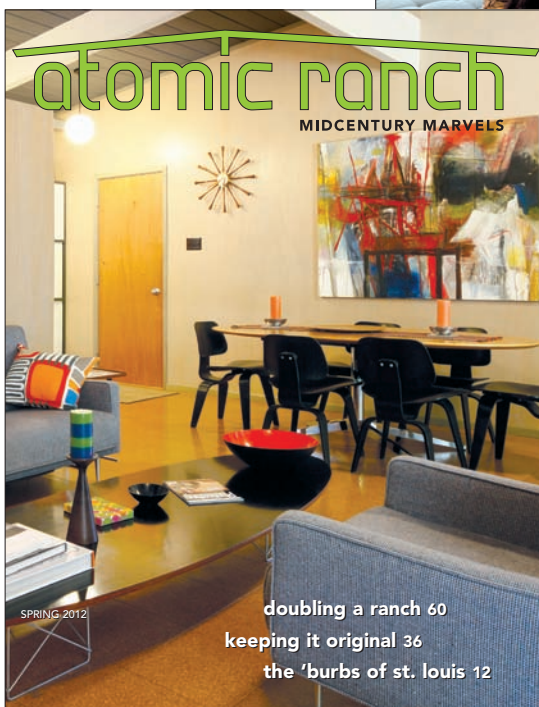
And while the Great Recession left no magazine unscathed,

Atomic Ranch saw some of its biggest growth — as much as 34 percent — between 2006-2008, a time when even larger publishers were closing their doors. That growth rate has since leveled off to about 9 percent, but the magazine counts subscribers in every state as well as Canada and internationally. Its top readership is in California, followed by Texas, Washington and Oregon.

“Despite the recession we show increases year to year — our total print run from 2007 to 2012 has more than doubled,” said Publisher Jim Brown. “In the same period, subscribers have also doubled — so I will take that as a success and it’s due to the fact that I think our growing audience recognizes the value of their mid-century homes — these houses that have been hiding in plain sight all along.”

Michelle also credits popular culture for a boost in readership recently.

“With shows like ‘Mad Men,’ people are more sensitized to these homes and their style than they were five years



Atomic Ranch has found its niche by focusing on the experience of owning post-war-era ranch homes.

ago,” she said.

Atomic Ranch draws 40 percent of its revenues from home subscriptions, 30 percent from advertising and approximately 23 percent from newsstand sales, while the remaining 7 percent is rounded out by book sales. The publisher’s first book — an overview of ranches entitled “Design Ideas for Stylish Ranch Homes,” debuted in 2006,

and it just released its second title, “Midcentury Interiors,” earlier this year. That book focuses on the interiors of eight houses.

Specific focus

What sets the magazine apart from other architecture magazines has been its focus on post-war ranch houses and the homeowner experience, rather than designers and architects.

In fact, Michelle says *Atomic Ranch* intentionally avoids featuring celebrities or “starchitects.”

“We’re about getting people to appreciate natural features, like pink bathrooms,” she said. “There is a stylistic range, but we try to expose people to

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interesting homes, whether modest or high-end.”

That includes everything from architecture, interior design, do-it-yourself projects, historical collecting — from furniture to anything else — to landscaping and historical mid-century designers such as Paul McCobb.

Atomic Ranch's popular features include “Working Class Heroes,” which features readers’ homes, “My Favorite Space,” which allows people to submit photos and information about, say, their awesome living room, and “Open House,” which speaks for itself.

“These are the most popular features because people can relate to them,” Gringeri-Brown said.

The two switch off in the role of addressing readers. Michelle’s Letter from the Editor column is titled “My 2 Cents” and Jim reaches out via his “Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch” column.

Both strive to avoid the “Hi-I-am-the-editor-and-here-is-what-you-will-be-reading” format.

“We try to go beyond what’s in the magazine to what’s percolating in our heads,” Brown said. “Because I am the photographer, the column gives me an opportunity to address people with words, and I can recall my own experience growing up in the ’50s and ’60s.”

Common thread

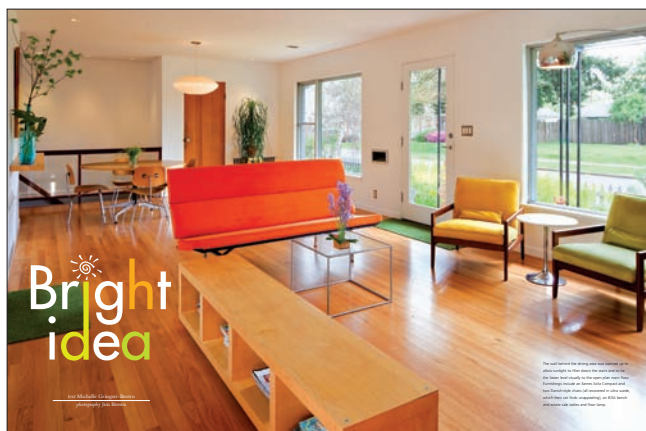
That tie to the era these homes represent translates to a strong preservation subtext that weaves through every issue and every feature.

“We are gently, but consistently advocating: Please don’t mess up an original house,” Brown said. “Consider what you have before making wholesale changes — so we’re championing these homes and neighborhoods.”

Atomic Ranch's initial target audience was ranch homeowners and that soon evolved to include all fans of mid-century and modern-design enthusiasts. The magazine still aims to gain more exposure among those groups — and all the other potential readers in between.

“Our typical reader could be a first-time homeowner in their late 20s or early 30s — because ranches are still cheaper — or it could be a designer or empty-nesters who have tired of stairs and want a single-level home,” Gringeri-Brown said.

The magazine’s singular focus is



Coloring

"I cannot pretend to feel impartial about colors. I rejoice with the brilliant ones and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns."
—Vincent Churchill

1

Previously owned and restored the Sugarland House, it's kind of mysterious (and a bit of a mess). The house is a 19th-century Victorian-style house, but it's been converted into a modern house. The house is a 19th-century Victorian-style house, but it's been converted into a modern house. The house is a 19th-century Victorian-style house, but it's been converted into a modern house.

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and McKinley Geringer Brown
photography David Hedges



Outside the Lines



admittedly challenging in terms of variety of coverage and features, but the Browns say *Atomic Ranch* still sparks the same passion as it did eight years ago.

Articles typically begin as stories pitched by people who have fixed up their ranch homes; despite the common theme, Gingeri-Brown said each pitch is a unique story.

"Because it is unique to them — it's their home," she said. "So I look for nuances, like 'OK, this guy kept the original cabinets even though he got a new IKEA kitchen.'"

Brainstorming ideas

Like every magazine, *Atomic Ranch's* editorial meetings encompass a lot of discussion and brainstorming. Staff, including Editorial Assistant Cheyenne Tackitt, the Browns' daughter, are always given the opportunity to weigh in and, if warranted, veto ideas.

"There are ideas where we have to acknowledge that, while something doesn't necessarily speak to our aesthetic, it may speak to readers, so that forces us to come out of our own preference box," she added.

Stories' gestation periods can range up to two years; Brown said it's not uncommon for some homes whose stories are

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initially daunting to become great articles once they are published.

Brown shoots all of the cover photography, and because it's not uncommon for him to photograph a number of houses in a specific area, images are spread out over a number of issues. And while stories and features are often born out of those photos, it's not always that simple.

"Some people think you can just drive through a neighborhood and spot houses — not true," he said. "And sometimes when you do spot a house and knock on the door you don't want anything to do with it once you see what's on the inside — but you are dealing with someone's pride and joy."

Including the Browns, *Atomic Ranch* counts nine staff in its masthead, including two people in its ad department. Roughly a quarter of the content in the magazine is staff-generated, according to Gringeri-Brown, and the rest is comprised of contributed photos and stories that are submitted to the magazine and then edited by staff.

Atomic Ranch occasionally relies on freelance writers but as a family-owned niche magazine, budgets don't typically allow for that.

"We generally compensate photographers, but out of necessity we have to be pretty frugal here," Gringeri-Brown said.

The small staff also means less time and fewer resources for branching out to new platforms, although both Jim and Michelle believe publishing two books has been a step in the right direction.

Mulling platforms

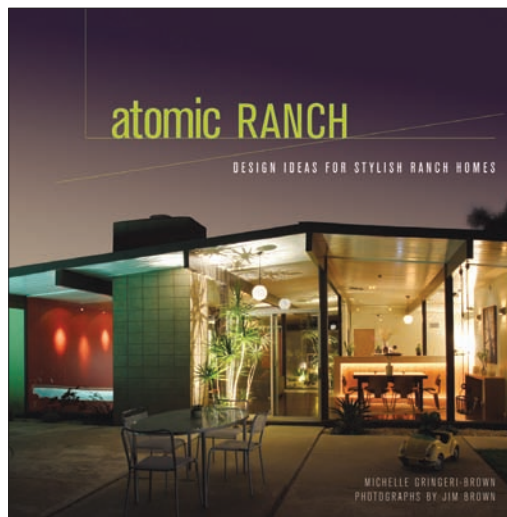
Atomic Ranch has yet to launch any iPad or mobile apps or products, but the staff does interact with its audience via email and on social platforms, thanks to a dedicated reader that was willing to take on the task of managing the publication's Facebook and Google+ presences.

"Having it run by a reader also helps keep the perspective honest and fresh," Gringeri-Brown said.

Brown said the fact that he and his wife are both "old-school graphic types" has also kept them from rushing headlong into digital platforms.

"To me, *Atomic Ranch* is, and should be, a tactile experience," Brown said. "I grew up





Atomic Ranch has expanded its presence with the launch of two books — its first in 2006, and a second earlier this year.

with magazines and the touch, the look, the feel of heavy paper and you archive it by putting on your shelf.”

Still, *Atomic Ranch's* staff continues to mull emerging platforms to see what might make sense for the magazine's future.

The magazine got a redesign five years ago — conceptualized by Art Director Nancy Anderson — which included a new cover logo and retooled department heads.

“We've evolved to a cleaner look overall,”

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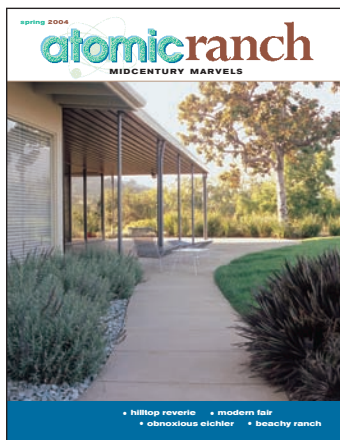
Brown said.

What's surprised Brown (who's been in publishing for 25 years as a photographer) most about running his own magazine is how hands-on the process is.

"Our Art Director Nancy Anderson and Michelle are communicating all of the time about every page, every word, every folio — they make decisions together," he said. "Even though we print our masthead in every issue, I think

people assume we have 30 people working here."

Atomic Ranch is paginated in Adobe InDesign and QuarkXPress, and then sent to American Web in Denver for printing. It is printed on 70-lb. Influence recycled matte stock. ■



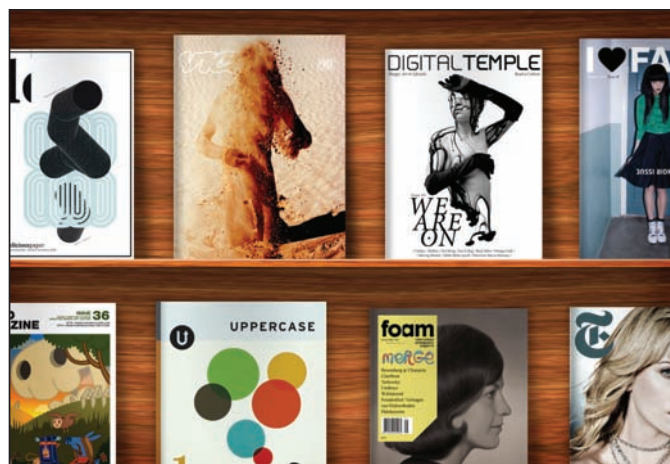
The first cover of Atomic Ranch, published in the spring of 2004.

{essence}

American Bungalow premiered in 1990 as a quarterly special-interest magazine dedicated to homes built in the early 20th century. The magazine focuses on architecture, furnishings and collectibles and their connection to the Arts and Crafts movement. American Bungalow is published by John Brinkmann and is based in California.



Image: American Bungalow



DIGITAL NEWSSTAND GETS NEW VICE

Vice earlier this summer partnered with Issuu Media to put its magazine on the digital newsstand in a bid to increase the reach of the magazine, which is circulated throughout the United States and some 30 other countries in print.

"The platform provides a compelling user case," Ashish Patel, *Vice's* head of social media, told *Magazines & More*. "It's a visually impressive way to put the magazine online."

Vice uploads PDFs of each edition to Issuu for placement in the newsstand.

Patel said there are plans in the works to syndicate the magazine's archives via Issuu's platform as well.

Social media via the magazine's website plays the key role in driving readers online to the Issuu edition.

The magazine targets the 18-to-34-year-old demographic and readership is male-dominant by a 6:4 ratio, Patel said.

"We are covering everything from news to politics to our bread and butter — sex, drugs and rock and roll."

Vice is free both in print and on Issuu. Monetization of the digital newsstand edition is via advertising.

"Although we haven't taken full advantage of this functionality yet, ads are clickable on Issuu, which can drive more value for our advertisers," Patel said. "And they can be changed out — we can resell the same content." ■