

Benjamin Bennett

The Story Behind Luxe Magazine

By Sherrie Wilkolaski

Travel can take you places you never dreamed of, and it can bring people into your lives that end up being a part of your daily life, once the excursion is over. While on a foodie trip in Burgundy, France, I met such a person, Benjamin Bennett. We were staying at La Ferm de la Lochere, owned by chef Katherine Frelon. She hosts culinary holidays and we were two of the journalists on this particular trip. We had the occasion to talk about each of the publications we were writing for, and I learned that he was more than a writer, he was a graphic designer with book and magazine experience. Given the nature of what I do for a living, he was someone I put on my list to follow up with. When the time came to find the creative director for *Luxe Beat Magazine*, I didn't hesitate to reach out to Ben. He was just what we were looking for and then some.

As a reader of a magazine, you may, or may not, have a full comprehension of what goes into putting together a monthly publication. From article conception, to editing, more editing and little bit more editing, to the selection of photographs, and the flow of content, there is a team of specialists working on each issue. At the point in which all of the content is finalized, it moves on to the design department. Enter, Benjamin Bennett. If you've been reading *Luxe Beat Magazine* since the release of its first issue, you'll notice a transformation of the look and feel of the publication. Ben was fulfilling some prior commitments before the initial release, and we had pulled in a temporary design firm to work on the first few issues. Unfortunately, the designer fell ill and I had to pick up the design work. Have I mentioned

that I am not a graphic artist? There was a huge sigh of relief when Ben finally picked up 100% of the design work. He had the sense of style and eye for design that we envisioned. He also has a love of food, travel and zest for life, so he fits right into the group.

Maralyn Hill, Executive Editor, says, "We wanted the extraordinary and that is what we get with the creative talent of Benjamin Bennett. Our contributors provide great images and Ben works his magic in laying them out to enhance the words on the page."

"More importantly, Ben works closely with us to make *Luxe Beat Magazine* be the best that it can be. We know what we want and between all of us, we keep adding more. Ben is eager to keep *Luxe Beat Magazine* on the cutting edge. Fortunately, during deadlines and time zones, we are all able to keep a sense of humor."

He says of his role as creative director, "My role is to ensure quality. Here at Luxe Beat, we pride ourselves on this and it can be easy to cut corners. Quality and luxury do not cut corners! I ensure that the magazine and brand are the epitome of luxury and always looking to improve and thus stay ahead of the game." He has been designing since he was 10. "My father is a designer (so are my brother and sister!), and I have always been interested in the finer, more quality things in life. After completing art and design at school, I went on to study graphic design at Cornwall College, then completed a degree in visual information design at the famous Ravensbourne College of Design and Broadcasting. I have been working in design ever since; firstly with book

publishers, then in advertising and editorial sectors, to name a few."

His approach to the design of the magazine, simplicity. "Busy pages always detract the eye and make it harder to read. By stripping all ornament from the page, you are left with the bare bones — the essentials — this is where the designers come in and makes the page sing and thus the reader is left with a layout that is easy to read and pleasant to look at. The images can breathe and the copy talks." He says of the transformation of the publication since he came on board, "I like to think it's now purer, cleaner and has more scope for content. We have excellent content in our magazine, and the design backs this perfectly, I think. Everyone loves big, beautiful images and that's what I've brought to the design — pictures lead content (especially with the food and travel pages) that readers will enjoy looking at and give them that feeling of almost being there!"

There is more to Ben than just design. He is a total "Type A" personality who can't seem to sit still. "I enjoy keeping fit! I love running, it's become a bit of an obsession this year. I ran my first 10km run, in London, in July and loved it. I've done two others since and have two more lined up! My personal best is 46:13, and I'm aiming next year to get as close to 40 minutes as possible. I also love cooking. I take a recipe and will make it exactly as described, then will make it another time and tweak it slightly, or maybe combine recipes. Eight years ago, I could barely cook, so it's nice to have got myself to this position of cooking. There's not much better than cooking." He says that competing as a runner does influence

his creativity, "I believe running helps relieve stress and thus contributes toward a healthy mind. That has to be good for your creativity!"

While on our trip in France, I had the opportunity to cook with Ben. We also met up again in London for a follow-up event with chef Katherine Frelon, so I've seen his passion for food, live and in person. He opened up about where this passion for food originated, "Food is something I really didn't pay much attention to until a girlfriend introduced me to Heston Blumenthal. I became quite interested in his idea of perfecting classic dishes. I learnt so much 'attempting' to make some of these recipes! One success story is the spaghetti bolognese recipe. I followed it to the word, and afterwards, I could take some of those methods and adapt them to make a simpler, quicker version of my own. My version still takes about 4-5hrs, but it's an improvement on the 10hr version Heston does! I now adapt that ideal to most things I cook — I find a recipe I like the look of, make it a couple of times, then adapt to make it my own. I'm also making my way through a book called *Flour Water Salt Yeast: The Fundamentals of Artisan Bread and Pizza*, by Ken Forkish. Through this, I'm learning the basics on how to make bread from scratch! It's actually quite difficult but ultimately rewarding — few things top a slice of warm, freshly baked bread with lashings of butter and a glass of good red wine!"

Alright ladies, he's a hardworking graphic designer and he cooks. The trifecta is this young gentleman is a travel writer. "I'm lucky to work in an environment where I am given these opportunities. Writing is not my

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Designer

Featured Contributor

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Featured Contributor

forte, but through the chance of visiting places around the world, it's something I've been able to work on. Visiting Florida and the Sea World parks in June this year was really fun, and their roller coasters are an experience everyone needs to enjoy at least once in their life! It also opened my eyes up to another side of Seaworld -- the rescue side, which I've realised people don't know exists! Mauritius in 2013 was idyllic paradise as was Iceland, but in such a different way, and from visiting these, you realise how much the world has to offer."

He doesn't have a favorite travel destination, he focuses more on the experience, "It depends on how I'm feeling, and what kind of holiday I'm looking for. For a beach holiday, I'd say the Caribbean. I was lucky to have visited there twice a few years ago, and there's a small special island just off of St. Maarten that had a restaurant on it that only serves lobster and French wine! Can't say what the island is called though, as it's a bit of a secret! For a city break, it would have to be New York. I'm in love with that city. It has so much to offer and I've found that as cool as London is, it is still following the standard and style set by NYC! I can't wait to go back! For a holiday with friends, it would probably be Ibiza. You only need a couple of nights there and you're done! It's expensive but SOOO worth it!"

His approach to travel has me looking at it in a different light. I can't help but ask what type of travel he would like to experience next. "Somewhere that has been the least touched by humans. I have this real urge to go to Siberia! Micronesia is another place I'd love to see. I like the idea of spending a few days in remote paradise, living off coconuts and other fruits of nature."

As the Editor-in-Chief of *Luxe Beat Magazine*, I can truly say it is a pleasure working with Ben, and doing this interview has made me appreciate him more. I knew there was a story behind this luxury magazine designer, that was meant to be uncovered. I'll leave you with his final words on what he is planning for us in 2015 as it relates to the publication, "More interaction and more innovation. I don't want to say too much, as it will spoil the surprise, but the magazine it going to have a great year next year, I feel! Contrary to my previous answers, I will bring in a flurry or two — some minimal amount of ornament, but only if it's right for the magazine."



Some of Ben's favorite things

Favorite Dessert

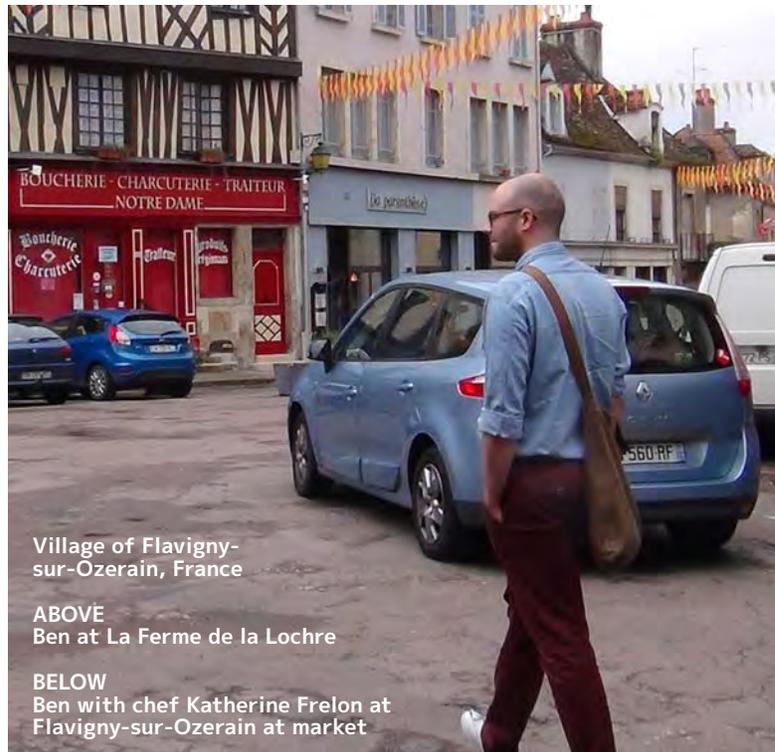
Not sure I really have one as it changes quite regularly. At the moment it would be anything to do with baklava- the middle-eastern sweet made with almonds and honey. It is just simply divine!

Favorite Holiday

One that involves exploration, relaxation and good company. But I'd say I'd prefer three different favourite holidays. A beach holiday (relaxing), one visiting a new country or city (exploring) and one going away with my good friends which can be anywhere!

Favorite Band

That's a tricky one as I like anything and everything really. If I'm pushed though I'd say: The People Under the Stairs, Rolling Stones and Elbow ... Oh and I can't stop listening to Ben Howard right now!



Village of Flavigny-sur-Ozerain, France

ABOVE
Ben at La Ferme de la Lochre

BELOW
Ben with chef Katherine Frelon at Flavigny-sur-Ozerain at market

