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**AIGA Annual: 365 Design Competition  
Comprehensive Brand Strategies**

Blue Note Records  
Brand Re-Positioning  
Fall 2002

**PROJECT MISSION**

**DEFINE AND EXPRESS THE POSITION AND ESSENCE OF A BRAND IDENTITY.**

Step One: First describe a company whose brand positioning and personality needs re-focusing. My approach was to identify a brand whose personality was once strong in their market, yet due to the passing of time and emergence of new competition, is in need of refocusing.

Step Two: I have provided a statement naming the brand I have chosen and reasons for why a re-positioning is necessary. Below is the statement I wrote at the beginning of the project after extensive research on companies and their brand essence and public awareness of the brand.

Once a legendary Jazz record label, Blue Note has seemed to lose sight of their original goals. With modern popular music being based upon superficiality, and being written in the same way an automobile might be constructed on an assembly line, the hip, improvisational style of "golden years Blue Note Jazz," seems to be lost somewhere in history. Reid Meier's work as the chief designer at Blue Note during those golden years played an influential role in the development of their brand, and ultimately, that image went on to become an iconic symbol/style of jazz music. In an era where Blue Note artists must compete with cookie-cutter pop music, and contemporary jazz knock-offs, Blue Note records needs not to attempt to follow suit and compete, instead directly separate themselves from their "competition," and realize that they offer a different product.

**FINDING POTENTIAL FOR THEMATIC CONTENT**

During its heyday, the Blue Note Record Label embodied the word "jazz" and spoke of it with an extremely casual and cool confidence no other Jazz label of the era could compete with. Blue Note was the Jazz label for the Jazz musician, or the true aficionado. Jazz of that era is often heralded as the shining moment of the genre and expressed spontaneity, innovation, resilience, and freedom.

At the very core of the company lies its most important theme. The theme that the revolutionary Jazz label actually gets its name, the ever elusive "blue note."

A blue note resides in all forms of music, particularly jazz, yet it was only recently that the term/note was given a place in western musicology. Music scholars define it as a microtone— a wavering pitch between say, a third and a flat third— in other words, it can not be notated. Even so, after having been given a definition by musicologists, in relation to jazz, the blue note remains ever elusive, appreciable only in relation to another note. We know it when we hear it and we hear it constantly. It is what every single jazz musician of the 50's and 60's feverishly searched and chased after.