

This document was inspired by my original Wikipedia entry for Amazin' Blue. The admins thought was too wordy and boring, and they were right, but I wanted to start chronicling the history of the organization. So, I'll use my own web page as my forum. From time to time, I'll add to this document as I recall more about the early days of the group and learn things about later incarnations.

I have no interest in chronicling the various disagreements and fights the group has had over the years. All a cappella groups have these and the past is probably where such recollections belong. Similarly, I have no intention of listing the various romances and hookups between members. Intragroup dating is a natural part of the mixed-voice a cappella scene.

## **Amazin' Blue**

Amazin' Blue is the oldest existing inclusive mixed-voice a cappella ensemble affiliated with The University of Michigan. It is a committee of the University Activities Center and a member of the Michigan A Cappella Council.

### **Current Members**

There are presently fourteen active members of Amazin' Blue.

1. Elise Amato
2. Camila Ballario
3. Caitlin Bloom
4. Jessica Bloom
5. Austin Chrzanowski
6. Joe Dimuzio
7. Gabriele Fazio
8. Bethany Felder
9. Lance Fletke
10. Andres Holder
11. Kirsten Knisely
12. Jake McClory
13. Adam Moskal
14. Peter Preonas

### **Total Membership**

Amazin' Blue numbers one hundred sixty-one total members, past and present. This figure includes everyone who has been accepted into membership of the organization irrespective of the duration of the membership. Four members were active for ten semesters: Andy Poe, Shana Radcliffe, Noah Miller, Josh Duchan. Three members were active for nine: Sarah Jackson, Karl Kasischke, Anna Callahan. Fifteen members were

active for a period significantly less than one semester before going inactive (essentially meaning that they were active for zero semesters), and so that the number of members active in Amazin' Blue for at least one semester or currently active is one hundred forty-six.

## **Group Origin**

Amazin' Blue was founded by graduate student Mike Wang at The University of Michigan. Wang had been a member of the Yale Mixed Company as an undergraduate and wanted to organize a mixed-voice a cappella ensemble at U-M. After posting flyers advertising auditions for "The Amazin' Blue" (the "The" was dropped from the group name almost immediately), and after two days of auditions, Wang accepted twenty members into the organization, besides himself. (The audition process was completed on Thursday 22 January 1987, and this is considered to be the birth date of Amazin' Blue.) This made the group larger than he had initially envisioned, but he presumed that some of the "Amazin' Bluers" (as members of the group are called) would not find the group to their liking. As it happened, eight of these members left the group not long after acceptance. The other thirteen members remained in the group for all or most of the semester, and these thirteen members are considered to be the "original cast" of Amazin' Blue: Jenny Bergin, George Davis, David Eliezer, Rick Freysinger, Sarah Jackson, Stuart Kaufman, Michelle Powers, Noelle Rodgers, Miguel Rodriguez, Brad Serbus, Sara Spinner, Jennifer Walrad, Mike Wang. Wang graduated at the end of the Winter 1987 semester making him an active member of the group for only a single semester.

## **Origin of Name**

The school colors of The University of Michigan are maize and blue. "Amazin' Blue" is a pun on these colors. This pun is not unique to the a cappella ensemble. There was a show choir at U-M in the 1970's called "The Amaizin Blues." In the early 1990's, members of the U-M basketball team recorded a single under the group name "The Amazin' Blue." The pun has also been used by sportscasters to describe various athletic teams or their fans. As the popularity of the a cappella ensemble has increased, other uses of the pun "Amazin' Blue" have decreased to an extent, but not completely.

## **Relationship to Other Mixed-Voice A Cappella Ensembles**

Amazin' Blue may or may not be the first mixed-voice a cappella ensemble at U-M. Top Priority, a mixed-voice a cappella ensemble dedicated to performing Christian music was founded at approximately the same time. Top Priority no longer exists. The Headnotes, a mixed-voice a cappella ensemble affiliated with The University of Michigan Law School has been in existence since at least 1989. Due to the incompleteness of available records, it is unknown whether Amazin' Blue was founded prior to The Headnotes. However,

Amazin' Blue is indisputably the oldest mixed-voice a cappella ensemble at U-M that is still in existence and with an audition process open to the entire student body.

The other mixed-voice a cappella ensembles at U-M are 58 Greene, Compulsive Lyres, Dicks & Janes, Gimble, Good News, Kol Hakavod, Kopitonez, and Maize Mirchi. (None of the mixed-voice ensembles at U-M have names beginning with "The" except for The Headnotes. This is somewhat unusual.) After Amazin' Blue and The Headnotes, the third oldest mixed-voice a cappella ensemble at U-M is Kol Hakavod (founded in 1993), a group dedicated to performing Jewish music.

For the record, the male ensembles are The Friars and The G-Men, and the female ensembles are The Harmonettes and The Sopranos. Of the fourteen a cappella groups at The University of Michigan, two are male, two are female, and ten are mixed. It is somewhat unusual for a university's a cappella scene to be dominated by mixed-voice ensembles.

## **The Monsters of A Cappella**

The Monsters of A Cappella was an annual event, originally organized by Amazin' Blue in 1991, featuring the three most recognizable a cappella groups at The University of Michigan at that time: The Friars (a men's group), The Harmonettes (a women's group), and Amazin' Blue. (Top Priority and The Headnotes were also active groups at that time, but their exposure was somewhat limited.) All profits from these concerts were donated to charity, originally The Ann Arbor Shelter Association (a homeless shelter), and ultimately SAFE House (a shelter for victims of domestic violence). The show almost always sold out Rackham Auditorium (which seats one thousand two hundred) and outsold the individual concerts of the three performing groups. (Ticket scalping occurred at this show as well.)

The very first Monsters of A Cappella concert occurred on Saturday 26 January 1991 and was opened by From The Edge, a now-defunct barbershop quartet from Ann Arbor and was hosted by Drew Weston, a popular psychology professor. This concert was the first time Amazin' Blue had performed with The Friars and The Harmonettes (both older ensembles) in a concert setting. Amazin' Blue received the most applause of the evening and was the only group to receive a standing ovation. The biggest crowd-pleaser of the set was the eleven minute "Schoolhouse Rock Medley," which Amazin' Blue performed with elaborately staged props and choreography. This concert firmly bestowed on Amazin' Blue the same name recognition of the older groups, The Friars and The Harmonettes.

The number of active a cappella ensembles at U-M increased dramatically in the mid-to-late 1990's (sometimes called the "a cappella explosion"). It was ultimately decided by the three member groups of Monsters that this concert was too exclusive of the other ensembles, and so it was discontinued in favor of the Michigan A Cappella Festival (or MACFest), organized by Dicks & Janes, which would feature all fourteen of the active groups. The last Monsters show, Monsters of A Cappella XI, occurred on Saturday 10

February 2001, and featured, in addition to the three member groups, The Accafellas of Michigan State University and The Rip Chords from The University of Illinois.

## **Taco Bell Canon**

"Taco Bell Canon" (sometimes called "Taco Bell Canon in F") was written and arranged by several members of the Yale Mixed Company and performed by that group in the middle 1980's. When Mike Wang established Amazin' Blue, the first songs the group did were songs that Wang had brought with him from Mixed Company, including "Taco Bell Canon." The song was an immediate hit at The University of Michigan, and Amazin' Blue included it on two of their albums: *Coed Naked A Cappella* (1991), and *Amazin' Blue's Compact Disc* (1992). The song was also featured on the BOCA Humor compendium. *Coed Naked A Cappella* won the Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award for Best Album that year, which increased sales of the album, and "Taco Bell Canon" won Best Song Runner Up also adding to the popularity of the recording. Although the recording by Amazin' Blue is the best-known, it is not the original recording of the piece. Mixed Company recorded it on their 1987 album "Where's the Stage?" However, this album was recorded prior to the foundation of the Contemporary A Cappella Society of America, and, thus, this recording, like nearly all collegiate albums of the era, did not enjoy widespread publicity.

The song is to the tune of Pachelbel's "Canon in D" and features lyrics pertaining not just to Taco Bell but to other fast food corporations. The song has become popular enough that other collegiate and high school a cappella groups starting performing it in the mid-1990's, and this song is still being performed by informal groups all over the country.

## **Discography**

Amazin' Blue has recorded ten albums. Several of these albums have won awards in the Contemporary A Cappella Recording Awards. These awards are listed beneath the corresponding album.

### **Amazin' Blue--Little Black Box (1989)**

Tracks:

1. Do the Locomotion/Some Kind of Wonderful--solo: Keith Chaffee, Sarah Jackson
2. I'm Feelin' Right--Scott Adler, Anna Callahan
3. My Romance
4. Blind Deaf -n- Dumb--solo: Tracy Plester, Fred Clarke
5. Vocamental
6. Baby Come Back to Me--solo: David Im
7. Baby Mine--solo: Jennifer Say Gan
8. One Fine Day--solo: Elise Andreas

## **Amazin' Blue--Coed Naked A Cappella (1991)**

Tracks:

1. What Is Love?--solo: Paul Bickel
2. Time and Tide--solo: Mudita Agarwal
3. Spy--solo: Karl Kasischke
4. Foreign Affair--solo: Phil Webster, Ainsley Beebe
5. Somethin' Bout Cha--solo: Scott Adler
6. Taco Bell Canon
7. Walkin' On Sunshine--solo: Anna Callahan
8. Psycho Killer--solo: Karl Kasischke
9. Found Your Home--solo: David Im
10. Hodja--solo: Paul Bickel
11. Vicious Love--solo: Sarah Jackson
12. All the Things You Are
13. You Can't Do That--solo: Fred Clarke
14. Tears of a Clown--solo: Jennifer Say Gan

CARA Awards: Mixed Collegiate Best Album, Mixed Collegiate Best Song (Found Your Home), Mixed Collegiate Best Arrangement Runner Up (Taco Bell Canon)

## **Amazin' Blue's Compact Disc (1992)**

Tracks:

1. Only the Good Die Young--solo: Dan Sonntag
2. Purple Haze
3. Englishman in New York--solo: Paul Bickel
4. Found Your Home--solo: David Im
5. Sweet Dreams
6. Route 66
7. Taco Bell Canon
8. My Funny Valentine--solo: Sheetal Bhagat
9. One More Minute--solo: Scott Adler
10. Walkin' On Sunshine--solo: Anna Callahan
11. Foreign Affair--solo: Phil Webster, Ainsley Beebe
12. Eyes in the Dark--solo: Scott Adler
13. Poisoning Pigeons in the Park--solo: Nick Hart
14. Shaker Song--solo: Sheetal Bhagat
15. Everybody Needs Somebody to Love--solo: Dan Sonntag, Carrie Simpson
16. Psycho Killer--solo: Karl Kasischke
17. Time and Tide--solo: Mudita Agarwal
18. Love Shack--solo: Paul Bickel, Anna Callahan, Sheetal Bhagat
19. Schoolhouse Rock Medley

CARA Awards: Mixed Collegiate Best Song Runner Up (Englishman in New York).  
This album was disqualified from the Best Album category due to it being a compilation album.

### **Amazin' Blue is A Little Crazy ... (1994)**

Tracks:

1. Crazy--solo: Mike Hoerberling
2. Hazy Shade of Winter
3. Mad About You--solo: Damien Heartwell
4. We Belong--solo: Jenny Rifken, Suzie Bertman, Sheetal Bhagat
5. There is Sweet Music
6. Walkin' on Broken Glass--solo: Carrie Simpson
7. All I Want--solo: Mike Hoerberling
8. Intermission
9. Star Dust
10. Poison--solo: Kelvin Chou, Greg Gephart
11. Freedom--solo: David Im
12. Brady Bunch Medley
13. Africa--solo: Andrew Quinn
14. Change in My Life--solo: Greg Gephart
15. Kyrie--solo: Sheetal Bhagat

CARA Awards: Best Album Runner Up, Best Arrangement (Kyrie)

### **Amazin' Blue--Earidescence (1996)**

Tracks:

1. Epilogue (Nothing 'Bout Me)--solo: Andrew Quinn
2. I'll Remember--solo: Joi Price
3. Southern Cross--solo: Jim Daly
4. Big Time--solo: Nathan Robbe
5. Only Love--solo: Suzie Bertman
6. The Downeaster "Alexa"--solo: Austin Quinn
7. Biggest Part of Me--solo: Andrew Quinn
8. Would I Lie to You?--solo: Suzie Bertman, Shana Radcliffe
9. Life in a Northern Town--solo: Damien Heartwell
10. Stay By Me--solo: Nathan Robbe
11. Seven Days--solo: Andrew Quinn
12. Possession--solo: Shana Radcliffe
13. Takin' It to the Streets--solo: Austin Quinn
14. Drive--solo: Jim Daly

### **Amazin' Blue--Allnighter (1998)**

Tracks:

1. Under African Skies--solo: Jeremy Fisher, Joi Price
2. Runaway--solo: Veronica Arriola
3. I Want You Back--solo: Andrew Quinn
4. Crash Into Me--solo: Dana Haynes
5. Walk Like an Egyptian--solo: Shana Radcliffe, Joi Price, Amanda Satchell
6. Lay Your Hands on Me--solo: Jim Daly
7. The Queen & the Soldier--solo: Wendy Galef
8. Precious Things--solo: Amanda Satchell
9. Thriller Medley--solo: Brad Whitfield, Jeremy Fisher, Andrew Quinn, Nathan Robbe, Chris Dwan, Amanda Satchell, Cari Curtiss, Joi Price
10. An Innocent Man--solo: Nathan Robbe
11. 867-5309 (Jenny)--solo: Greg Martin
12. You Might Think--solo: Shana Radcliffe
13. Crazy Love--solo: Brad Whitfield
14. Surrounded--solo: Amanda Satchell
15. Time After Time--solo: Jim Daly
16. My One and Only Love--solo: Rob Bertman

### **Amazin' Blue--Raising the Bar (2000)**

Tracks:

1. Millennium--solo: David Reiser
2. Barely Breathing--solo: Darryl Semira
3. Brick--solo: Matt Salter
4. (I've Got to Stop) Thinkin' 'Bout That--solo: Noah Miller
5. Sunny Came Home--solo: Maddy Wyatt
6. Don't Lose My Number--solo: Ryan Binder
7. Cosmic Girl--solo: Rob Bertman, Anita Aysola
8. Criminal--solo: Neely O'Brien
9. Talula--solo: Anna Gleichauf
10. Come Talk to Me--solo: Darryl Semira
11. At the Stars--solo: Dana Haynes
12. Warehouse--solo: Noah Miller
13. Goodbye Street--solo: Eric Day
14. Bouncing Around the Room--solo: Matt Salter, Dana Haynes
15. Ghost--solo: Maddy Wyatt, Neely O'Brien
16. Spirit Voices--solo: Anna Gleichauf

CARA Awards: Best Song Runner Up (Millennium)

### **Amazin' Blue--South U. and State (2002)**

Tracks:

1. Star Spangled Banner/America Medley--solo: Brian Netter, Mike Hondorp, Chelsea Krombach
2. Mona Lisa--solo: David Reiser
3. (Nice Dream)--solo: Noah Miller
4. More Than Words--solo: Mike Hondorp
5. She--solo: Erica Fenby
6. Anne Arbour--solo: Josh Duchan
7. Forgiveness--solo: Marie Cheng
8. All I Need--solo: Chelsea Krombach
9. Blame It On Me--solo: Noah Miller, Garrett Miller
10. River--solo: Aviva Gibbs
11. Why Should I Cry For You--solo: Mike Hondorp
12. Cowboy Take Me Away--solo: Mikki Weinstein
13. It's Raining Men--solo: Chelsea Krombach, Mike Hondorp, Erica Fenby
14. Sailing--solo: Ryan Binder
15. A Little Warm Death--solo: Noah Miller
16. I Wish--solo: Erica Fenby

### **Amazin' Blue--<Self Titled> (2004)**

Tracks:

1. If I Ever Lose My Faith in You--solo: Justin Paul
2. September--solo: Noah Miller
3. China--solo: Whitney Bashor
4. Harder to Breathe--solo: Josh Duchan
5. The Groove--solo: Jordan Clawson
6. Eleanor Rigby--solo: Justin Paul
7. Soar--solo: Whitney Bashor
8. Waffle House--solo: Jeff Blim
9. Bring Me to Life--solo: Amy Trobaugh
10. The Pink Panther Theme--solo: Jessica Palter, Jeff Blim
11. Angel--solo: Alexis Sims, Chelsea Krombach
12. Solsbury Hill--solo: Josh Duchan
13. I Feel the Earth Move (live)--solo: Whitney Bashor
14. Talula (Valwe Remix)--solo: Anna Gleichauf

### **Amazin' Blue--Shades of Blue (2006)**

Tracks:

1. Undertow--solo: Riana Nelson
2. Oh Yeah, It Feels So Good--solo: Jeff Blim, Paul Lessard, Alexis Sims, Kate Bowerman, Riana Nelson
3. Hush--solo: Matt George
4. Debra--solo: Aaron Pearlman

5. Underappreciated--solo: Tanya Komblevitz
6. Still Fighting It--solo: Aaron Pearlman
7. Lately--solo: Jordan Clawson
8. Iowa--solo: Alexis Sims
9. Home Again--solo: Jordan Clawson, Marc Paskin, Katie Johnston, Cara Akselrad, Alexis Sims, Louis Preonas
10. Rock Me--solo: Demi Fragale
11. Hide and Seek--solo: Katie Johnston
12. How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)--solo: Josh Duchan
13. Bonus

## **Best of Collegiate A Cappella**

Amazin' Blue has been a featured artist on almost all of the albums in the BOCA series (tracks on these albums are chosen from hundreds of submissions each year):

1. BOCA 1995: Englishman in New York
2. BOCA 1996: Kyrie
3. BOCA 1997: Drive
4. BOCA 1998: Precious Things
5. BOCA 1999: Crazy Love
6. BOCA HUMOR: Taco Bell Canon
7. BOCA 2001: Millennium
8. BOCA 2002: She
9. BOCA 2004: China
10. BOCA 2005: Angel

The group does not have tracks on BOCA 2000, BOCA 2003, BOCA 2006, or BOCA 2007. Only one collegiate a cappella group has tracks on more albums in this series than Amazin' Blue: Off the Beat from The University of Pennsylvania.

## **International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella**

Amazin' Blue has been involved in this live performance competition since its inception in 1996. Here is the list of awards Amazin' Blue has won. Note that Amazin' Blue's victory in the 1998 semifinals allowed the group to compete in the final round at Carnegie Hall.

1. 1998 MidWest Quarter-Final: Champion, Best Soloist (Jim Daly, Time After Time)
2. 1998 MidWest Semi-Final: Champion, Best Soloist (Jim Daly), Best Arrangement Runner Up (Jeremy Fisher, Time After Time)
3. 2000 MidWest Quarter-Final: 1st. Place, Best Soloist (Darryl Semira)
4. 2000 MidWest Semi-Final: 3rd. Place, Best Solo (Maddy Wyatt)

5. 2001 MidWest Quarter-Final: 2nd. Place, Best Arrangement (Anna Gleichauf, Forgiveness)
6. 2001 MidWest Semi-Final: 3rd. Place, Best Solo Runner Up (Marie Cheng)
7. 2002 MidWest Quarter-Final: 3rd. Place, Best Soloist (Mike Hondorp), Best Arrangement Runner Up (David Reiser, America Medley)
8. 2003 MidWest Quarter-Final: 2nd. Place, Best Soloist (Noah Miller)
9. 2003 MidWest Semi-Final: 2nd. Place, Best Soloist Runner Up (Alexis Sims)
10. 2004 MidWest Quarter-Final: 2nd. Place, Outstanding Choreography (Harder to Breathe)
11. 2004 MidWest Semi-Final: Outstanding Arrangement (Jeff Blim, The Pink Panther Theme)
12. 2005 MidWest Division: 3rd. Place, Outstanding Soloist (Tanya Komblevitz)