He became renowned for his inventive graphics in the 1990s. Having worked as a sociology teacher and professional surfer in the late 1970s, he art directed various music, skateboarding, and surfing magazines through the 1980/90s, including twSkateboarding, twSnowboarding, Surfer, Beach Culture and the music magazine Ray Gun. As art director of Ray Gun (1992-5), Carson came to worldwide attention. In a feature story, NEWSWEEK magazine said he "changed the public face of graphic design".

His layouts featured distortions or mixes of 'vernacular' typefaces and fractured imagery, rendering them almost illegible. Indeed, his maxim of the 'end of print' questioned the role of type in the emergent age of digital design, following on from California New Wave and coinciding with experiments at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. In the later 1990s he added corporate clients to his list of clients, including Microsoft, Armani, Nike, Levis, British Airways, Quiksilver, Sony, Pepsi, Citibank, Yale University, Toyota and many others. When Graphic Design USA Magazine (NYC) listed the “most influential graphic designers of the era” David was listed as one of the all time 5 most influential designers, with Milton Glaser, Paul Rand, Saul Bass and Massimo Vignelli.