

# Rolling Stone

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## Rolling Stone

- *Rolling Stone Press is the magazine's associated book publishing imprint.*
- *Rolling Stone is an American monthly magazine that focuses on popular culture.*
- *Straight Arrow Press was the magazine's associated book publishing imprint, Straight Arrow Publishing Co., Inc. was the publishing company that published Rolling Stone.*

Rolling Stone is an American monthly magazine that focuses on popular culture. It was founded in San Francisco, California in 1967 by Jann Wenner, who is still the magazine's publisher, and the music critic Ralph J. Gleason. It was first known for its musical coverage and for political reporting by Hunter S. Thompson. In the 1990s, the magazine shifted focus to a younger readership interested in youth-oriented television shows, film actors, and popular music. In recent years, it has resumed its traditional mix of content.

Rolling Stone Press is the magazine's associated book publishing imprint. Straight Arrow Press was the magazine's associated book publishing imprint, Straight Arrow Publishing Co., Inc. was the publishing company that published Rolling Stone.

## History

### Founding and early history

- *Rolling Stone magazine was founded in San Francisco in 1967 by Jann Wenner and Ralph Gleason.*
- *As of edition of October 30, 2008, Rolling Stone has had a smaller, standard-format magazine size.*
- *In the very first edition, Wenner wrote that Rolling Stone "is not just about the music, but about the things and attitudes that music embraces".*

Rolling Stone magazine was founded in San Francisco in 1967 by Jann Wenner and Ralph Gleason. To get it off the ground, Wenner borrowed \$7,500 from his own family and from the parents of his soon-to-be wife, Jane Schindelheim. The first issue carried a cover date of November 9, 1967, and was in newspaper format with a lead article on the Monterey Pop Festival. The cover price was 25¢ (equivalent to \$1.88 in 2016).

In the first issue, Wenner explained that the title of the magazine referred to the 1950 blues song "Rollin' Stone", recorded by Muddy Waters, and Bob Dylan's hit single "Like a Rolling Stone":

Some authors have attributed the name solely to Dylan's hit single: "At [Ralph] Gleason's suggestion, Wenner named his magazine after a Bob Dylan song." Rolling Stone initially identified with and reported the hippie counterculture of the era. However, it distanced itself from the underground newspapers of the time, such as Berkeley Barb, embracing more traditional journalistic standards and avoiding the radical politics of the underground press. In the very first edition, Wenner wrote that Rolling Stone "is not just about the music, but about the things and attitudes that music embraces".

In the 1970s, Rolling Stone began to make a mark with its political coverage, with the likes of gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson writing for the magazine's political section. Thompson first published his most famous work *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* within the pages of Rolling Stone, where he remained a contributing editor until his death in 2005. In the 1970s, the magazine also helped launch the careers of many prominent authors, including Cameron Crowe, Lester Bangs, Joe Klein, Joe Eszterhas, Ben Fong-Torres, Patti Smith and P. J. O'Rourke. It was at this point that the magazine ran some of its most famous stories, including that of the Patty Hearst abduction odyssey. One interviewer, speaking for a large number of his peers, said that he bought his first copy of the magazine upon initial arrival on his college campus, describing it as a "rite of passage".

In 1977, the magazine moved its headquarters from San Francisco to New York City. Editor Jann Wenner said San Francisco had become "a cultural backwater".

During the 1980s, the magazine began to shift towards being a general "entertainment" magazine. Music was still a dominant topic, but there was increasing coverage of celebrities in television, films and the pop culture of the day. The magazine also initiated its annual "Hot Issue" during this time.

Rolling Stone was initially known for its musical coverage and for Thompson's political reporting. In the 1990s, the magazine changed its format to appeal to a younger readership interested in youth-oriented television shows, film actors and popular music. This led to criticism that the magazine was emphasizing style over substance. In recent years, the magazine has resumed its traditional mix of content, including in-depth political stories. It has also expanded content to include coverage of financial and banking issues. As a result, the magazine has seen its circulation increase and its reporters invited as experts to network television programs of note.

The printed format has gone through several changes. The first publications, in 1967–72, were in folded tabloid newspaper format, with no staples, black ink text, and a single color highlight that changed each edition. From 1973 onwards, editions were produced on a four-color press with a different newsprint paper size. In 1979, the bar code appeared. In 1980, it became a gloss-paper, large format (10"×12") magazine. As of edition of October 30, 2008, Rolling Stone has had a smaller, standard-format magazine size.

## 2000s

- *In 2005, Dana Leslie Fields, former publisher of Rolling Stone, who had worked at the magazine for 17 years, was an inaugural inductee into the Magazine Hall of Fame.*

After years of declining readership, the magazine experienced a major resurgence of interest and relevance with the work of two young journalists in the late 2000s, Michael Hastings and Matt Taibbi.[citation needed]

In 2005, Dana Leslie Fields, former publisher of Rolling Stone, who had worked at the magazine for 17 years, was an inaugural inductee into the Magazine Hall of Fame.

In 2009, Taibbi unleashed an acclaimed series of scathing reports on the financial meltdown of the time. He famously described Goldman Sachs as "a great vampire squid".

## 2010s

- *On January 31, 2019, Penske acquired BandLab's 49% stake in Rolling Stone, gaining full ownership of the magazine.*
- *In 2012, Taibbi, through his coverage of the Libor scandal, emerged as an expert on that topic, which led to media appearances outside Rolling Stone.*
- *In September 2017, Wenner Media announced that the remaining 51% of Rolling Stone magazine is up for sale.*

Bigger headlines came at the end of June 2010. Rolling Stone caused a controversy in the White House by publishing in the July issue an article by journalist Michael Hastings entitled, "The Runaway General", quoting criticism by General Stanley A. McChrystal, commander of the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan commander, about Vice President Joe Biden and other Administration members of the White House. McChrystal resigned from his position shortly after his statements went public.

In 2010, Taibbi documented illegal and fraudulent actions by banks in the foreclosure courts, after traveling to Jacksonville, Florida and sitting in on hearings in the courtroom. His article, Invasion of the Home Snatchers also documented attempts by the judge to intimidate a homeowner fighting foreclosure and the attorney Taibbi accompanied into the court.

In January 2012, the magazine ran exclusive excerpts from Hastings' book just prior to publication. The book, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan*, provided a much more expansive look at McChrystal and the culture of senior American military and how they become embroiled in such wars. The book reached Amazon's bestseller list in the first 48 hours of release, and it received generally favorable reviews. Salon's Glenn Greenwald described it as "superb," "brave" and "eye-opening".

In 2012, Taibbi, through his coverage of the Libor scandal, emerged as an expert on that topic, which led to media appearances outside Rolling Stone.

On November 9, 2012, the magazine published its first Spanish-language section on Latino music and culture, in the issue dated November 22.

In September 2016, Advertising Age reported that Wenner is in the process of selling a 49% stake of the magazine to a company from Singapore called BandLab. The new investor will have no direct involvement in the editorial content of the magazine.

In September 2017, Wenner Media announced that the remaining 51% of Rolling Stone magazine is up for sale. In December 2017, Penske Media acquired the remaining stake from Wenner Media. On January 31, 2019, Penske acquired BandLab's 49% stake in Rolling Stone, gaining full ownership of the magazine.

## Website

- *For example, one group that is listed on both Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time and Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time is Toots and the Maytals, with biographical details from Rolling Stone that explain how Toots and the Maytals are responsible for coining the term "reggae" in their song "Do the Reggay".*

Rolling Stone's website features selected current articles, reviews, blogs, MP3s. The website also has other features, such as searchable and free encyclopedic articles about artists, with images and sometimes sound clips of their work. The articles and reviews are sometimes in a revised form of the published versions. The website also carries political and cultural articles and entries selected from the magazine's archives.

The site at one time had an extensive message-board forum. By the late 1990s, this had developed into a thriving community, with a large number of regular members and contributors worldwide. However, the site was also plagued with numerous Internet trolls and malicious code-hackers, who vandalized the forum substantially. The magazine abruptly deleted the forum in May 2004, then began a new, much more limited message board community on their site in late 2005, only to remove it again in 2006. In March 2008, the website started a new message board section once again, then deleted it in April 2010.

Rolling Stone devotes one of its table of contents pages to promoting material currently appearing on its website, listing detailed links to the items. The magazine also has a page at MySpace, Facebook and Twitter.

On April 19, 2010, the website was updated drastically and now features the complete archives of Rolling Stone. The archive was first launched under a for-pay model, but has since transitioned to a free-with-print-subscription model. In the spring of 2012, Rolling Stone launched a federated search feature which searches both the website and the archive.

The website has become an interactive source of biographical information on music artists in addition to historical rankings from the magazine. Users can cross-reference lists and they are also provided with historical insights. For example, one group that is listed on both Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time and Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time is Toots and the Maytals, with biographical details from Rolling Stone that explain how Toots and the Maytals are responsible for coining the term "reggae" in their song "Do the Reggay". For biographical information on all artists, the website contains a directory listed alphabetically.

## Glixel

- *Gus Wenner, Jann Wenner's son, stated that "gaming is today what rock 'n' roll was when Rolling Stone was founded".*
- *Glixel was originally hosted on Rolling Stone's website and transitioned to its own domain by October 2016.*
- *Stories from Glixel are included on the Rolling Stone website, while writers for Rolling Stone were also able to contribute to Glixel.*

In May 2016, Wenner Media announced plans to create a separate online publication dedicated to the coverage of video games and their culture. Gus Wenner, Jann Wenner's son, stated that "gaming is today what rock 'n' roll was when Rolling Stone was founded". Glixel was originally hosted on Rolling Stone's website and transitioned to its own domain by October 2016. Stories from Glixel are included on the Rolling Stone website, while writers for Rolling Stone were also able to contribute to Glixel. The site was headed by John Davison, and its offices were located in San Francisco. Rolling Stone closed down the offices in June 2017 and fired the entire staff, citing the difficulties of working with the remote site from their main New York office. Brian Crecente, founder of Kotaku and co-founder of bigger Polygon, was hired as editorial director and runs the site from the main New York office. Following the sale of Rolling Stone's assets to Penske Media Corporation, the Glixel content was merged into the routine publishing of Variety, with Crecente still as editorial director.

## Editorial stance

- *The Rolling Stone endorsed Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in the run-up for the 2016 U.S. presidential election.*

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## Restaurant

- *In December 2009, the Los Angeles Times reported that the owners of Rolling Stone magazine planned to open a Rolling Stone restaurant in the Hollywood & Highland Center in Hollywood in the spring of 2010.*

In December 2009, the Los Angeles Times reported that the owners of Rolling Stone magazine planned to open a Rolling Stone restaurant in the Hollywood & Highland Center in Hollywood in the spring of 2010. The expectation was that the restaurant could become the first of a national chain if it was successful. As of November 2010, the "soft opening" of the restaurant was planned for December 2010. In 2011, the restaurant was open for lunch and dinner as well as a full night club downstairs on the weekends. The restaurant closed in February 2013.

## Criticism

- *Rolling Stone editor Jann Wenner has made all of his political donations to Democrats.*
- *A critic for Slate magazine described a conference at which 1984's The Rolling Stone Record Guide was scrutinized.*
- *Rolling Stone magazine has been criticized for reconsidering many classic albums that it had previously dismissed, and for frequent use of the 3.5-star rating.*

One major criticism of Rolling Stone involves its generational bias toward the 1960s and 1970s. One critic referred to the Rolling Stone list of the "500 Greatest Songs" as an example of "unrepentant rockist fogeyism". In further response to this issue, rock critic Jim DeRogatis, a former Rolling Stone editor, published a thorough critique of the magazine's lists in a book called Kill Your Idols: A New Generation of Rock Writers Reconsiders the Classics, which featured differing opinions from many younger critics.

Rolling Stone magazine has been criticized for reconsidering many classic albums that it had previously dismissed, and for frequent use of the 3.5-star rating. For example, Led Zeppelin was largely written off by Rolling Stone magazine critics during the band's most active years in the 1970s, but by 2006, a cover story on the band honored them as "the Heaviest Band of All Time". A critic for Slate magazine described a conference at which 1984's The Rolling Stone Record Guide was scrutinized. As he described it, "The guide virtually ignored hip-hop and ruthlessly panned heavy metal, the two genres that within a few years would dominate the pop charts. In an auditorium packed with music journalists, you could detect more than a few anxious titters: How many of us will want our record reviews read back to us 20 years hence?"

The hiring of former FHM editor Ed Needham further enraged critics who alleged that Rolling Stone had lost its credibility.

The 2003 Rolling Stone's 100 Greatest Guitarists of all Time article, which named only two female musicians, resulted in Venus Zine answering with their own list, entitled "The Greatest Female Guitarists of All Time".

Conservative columnist Jonah Goldberg stated that Rolling Stone had "essentially become the house organ of the Democratic National Committee". Rolling Stone editor Jann Wenner has made all of his political donations to Democrats.

Rolling Stone's film critic, Peter Travers, has been criticized for his high number of repetitively used blurbs.

### Tsarnaev cover

- *In conclusion he wrote, "The survivors of the Boston Marathon deserve Rolling Stone cover stories, though I no longer feel that Rolling Stone deserves them."*
- *The controversial cover photograph that was used by Rolling Stone had previously featured on the front page of The New York Times on May 5, 2013.*

The August 2013 Rolling Stone cover, featuring then-accused (later convicted) Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, drew widespread criticism that the magazine was "glamorizing terrorism" and that the cover was a "slap in the face to the great city of Boston". The online edition of the article was accompanied by a short editorial stating that the story "falls within the traditions of journalism and Rolling Stone's long-standing commitment to serious and thoughtful coverage of the most important political and cultural issues of our day". The controversial cover photograph that was used by Rolling Stone had previously featured on the front page of The New York Times on May 5, 2013.

In response to the outcry, New England-based CVS Pharmacy and Tedeschi Food Shops banned their stores from carrying the issue. Also refusing to sell the issue were Walgreens;

Rite-Aid and Kmart; Roche Bros. and Stop & Shop;

H-E-B and Walmart;

7-Eleven;

Hy-Vee, Rutter's Farm, and United Supermarkets;

Cumberland Farms and Market Basket;

and Shaw's.

Boston mayor Thomas Menino sent a letter to Rolling Stone publisher Jann Wenner, calling the cover "ill-conceived, at best ... [it] reaffirms a message that destruction gains fame for killers and their 'causes'." Menino also wrote, "To respond to you in anger is to feed into your obvious market strategy", and that Wenner could have written about the survivors or the people who came to help after the bombings instead. In conclusion he wrote, "The survivors of the Boston Marathon deserve Rolling Stone cover stories, though I no longer feel that Rolling Stone deserves them."

## UVA false rape story

- *Rolling Stone retracted the story on April 5, 2015.*
- *On December 5, 2014, Rolling Stone's managing editor, Will Dana, apologized for not fact-checking the story.*
- *Rolling Stone subsequently issued three apologies for the story.*
- *Rolling Stone commissioned an outside investigation of the story and its problems by the dean of the Columbia School of Journalism.*

In the November 19, 2014 issue, the story "A Rape on Campus" was run about an alleged gang rape on the campus of the University of Virginia. Separate inquiries by Phi Kappa Psi, the fraternity accused by Rolling Stone of facilitating the alleged rape, and The Washington Post revealed major errors, omissions and discrepancies in the story. Reporter Sabrina Erdely's story was subject to intense media criticism. The Washington Post and Boston Herald issued calls for magazine staff involved in the report to be fired. Rolling Stone subsequently issued three apologies for the story. Some suggested that legal action against the magazine by persons accused of the rape might result.

On December 5, 2014, Rolling Stone's managing editor, Will Dana, apologized for not fact-checking the story. Rolling Stone commissioned an outside investigation of the story and its problems by the dean of the Columbia School of Journalism. The report uncovered journalistic failure in the UVA story and institutional problems with reporting at Rolling Stone. Rolling Stone retracted the story on April 5, 2015. On April 6, 2015, following the investigation and retraction of the story, Phi Kappa Psi announced plans to pursue all available legal action against Rolling Stone, including claims of defamation.

On May 12, 2015, UVA associate dean Nicole Eramo, chief administrator for handling sexual assault issues at the school, filed a \$7.5 million defamation lawsuit in Charlottesville Circuit Court against Rolling Stone and Erdely, claiming damage to her reputation and emotional distress. Said the filing, "Rolling Stone and Erdely's highly defamatory and false statements about Dean Eramo were not the result of an innocent mistake. They were the result of a wanton journalist who was more concerned with writing an article that fulfilled her preconceived narrative about the victimization of women on American college campuses, and a malicious publisher who was more concerned about selling magazines to boost the economic bottom line for its faltering magazine, than they were about discovering the truth or actual facts." On November 4, 2016, after 20 hours of deliberation, a jury consisting of eight women and two men found Rolling Stone, the magazine's publisher and Erdely liable for defaming Eramo.

On July 29, 2015, three graduates of the fraternity Phi Kappa Psi filed a lawsuit against Rolling Stone, its publisher Wenner Media, and a journalist for defamation and infliction of emotional distress. The same day, and just months after the controversy began, The New York Times reported that managing editor Will Dana was departing the magazine with his last date recorded as August 7, 2015. On November 9, 2015, the Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity



filed suit for \$25 million for damages to its reputation caused by the magazine's publication of this story, "with reckless disregard for the truth".

## In popular culture

- *"The Cover of Rolling Stone" is a song written by Shel Silverstein and first recorded by American rock group Dr. Hook & the Medicine Show.*
- *The song was written in response to some highly unfavorable reviews from Rolling Stone and other publications for Harrison's 1974 North American tour and the Dark Horse album.*

George Harrison's song "This Guitar" (1975), a lyrical sequel to his Beatles track "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" (1968), references the magazine in its second verse: "Learned to get up when I fall / Can even climb Rolling Stone walls". The song was written in response to some highly unfavorable reviews from Rolling Stone and other publications for Harrison's 1974 North American tour and the Dark Horse album.

The 2000 film *Almost Famous* centers on a teenage journalist writing for the magazine in the early 1970s while covering the fictional band Stillwater. The film was directed by Cameron Crowe and based on his own experiences as a young journalist for the magazine in the same time period.

"The Cover of Rolling Stone" is a song written by Shel Silverstein and first recorded by American rock group Dr. Hook & the Medicine Show. The song satirizes success in the music business; the song's narrator laments that his band, despite having the superficial attributes of a successful rock star (including drug usage, "teenage groupies, who'll do anything we say" and a frenetic guitar solo) has been unable to "get their pictures/on the cover of the Rolling Stone".

## Covers

- *John Lennon*
- *The Beatles, for example, have appeared on the cover more than 30 times, either individually or as a band.*
- *The first 10 issues featured, in order of appearance, the following:*
- *Tina Turner*
- *Some artists have been featured on the cover many times, and some of these pictures went on to become iconic.*

Some artists have been featured on the cover many times, and some of these pictures went on to become iconic. The Beatles, for example, have appeared on the cover more than 30 times, either individually or as a band. The first 10 issues featured, in order of appearance, the following:

John Lennon

Tina Turner

The Beatles

Jimi Hendrix, Donovan & Otis Redding

Jim Morrison

Janis Joplin

Jimi Hendrix

Monterey Pop Festival

John Lennon and Paul McCartney

Eric Clapton

## International editions

- *Australia – Rolling Stone Australia began as a supplement in 1969 in Revolution magazine.*
- *China – Rolling Stone in mainland China was licensed to One Media Group of Hong Kong and published in partnership with China Record Corporation in 2006.*

Argentina – Published by Publirevistas S. A. since April 1998. This edition also circulates in Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Australia – Rolling Stone Australia began as a supplement in 1969 in Revolution magazine. It became a full title in 1971 published by Phillip Frazer. It was published by Silvertongues from 1974 to 1987 and by Nextmedia Pty Ltd, Sydney until 2008. Notable editors and contributors include Phillip Frazer, Alistair Jones, Paul and Jane Gardiner, Toby Creswell, Clinton Walker and Kathy Bail. It was the longest running international edition but closed in January 2018.

Brazil – Published in Brazil since October 2006 by Spring Comunicações.

Bulgaria – Published in Bulgaria since November 2009 by Sivr Publications. Ceased publication as of the August/September 2011 issue.

Chile – Published by Edu Comunicaciones from May 2003 to December 2005. Published by El Mercurio from January 2006 to December 2011.

China – Rolling Stone in mainland China was licensed to One Media Group of Hong Kong and published in partnership with China Record Corporation in 2006. The magazine was in Chinese with translated articles and local content. It halted publication after one year.

Croatia – Published since October 2013 – 2015 by S3 Mediji. This edition also circulates in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

Colombia – Edited in Bogotá for Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Panama and Venezuela, since 1991.

France – Launched 2002. This edition temporarily ceased in 2007 and was relaunched in May 2008 under license with 1633SA publishing group.

Germany – Published in Germany since 1994 by Axel Springer AG.

India – Launched in March 2008 by MW Com, publishers of Man's World magazine.

Indonesia – Published in Indonesia from June 2005 to January 1, 2018 by a&e Media.

Italy – Published in Italy since 1980. After ceasing publication in 1982, it was relaunched in November 2003, first by IXO Publishing, and then by Editrice Quadratum until April 2014. The magazine is currently published by Luciano Bernardini de Pace Editore.

Japan – Launched in March 2007 by International Luxury Media Co., Ltd. (ILM). Published by atomixmedia Inc. (株式会社アトムミクスメディア, KK atomikkusumedia) since 2011.

Mexico – Published by PRISA Internacional from 2002 until May 2009; from June 2009 it is published by Editorial Televisa (subsidiary of Televisa) under license.

Middle East – Published in Dubai by HGW Media since November 2010.

Russia – Published since 2004, by Motor Media.

Spain – Published by PROGRESA (subsidiary of PRISA Group) in Madrid, since 1999.

Turkey – Published since June 2006 by GD Gazete Dergi.

South Africa – Published since November 2011.

United Kingdom – Published under the title Friends from 1969 to 1972.

## See also

- *The Rolling Stone Interview*

The Rolling Stone Interview

Counterculture of the 1960s

Tony Mott

## Additional reading

- *New York: Rolling Stone.*
- *"Rolling Stone, Once a Counterculture Bible, Will Be Put Up for Sale".*
- *The New Rolling Stone Album Guide.*
- *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll.*
- *The Rolling Stone Jazz Record Guide.*
- *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll.*

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Rolling Stone Cover to Cover – the First 40 Years: Searchable Digital Archive-Every Page, Every Issue. Renton, WA: Bondi Digital Pub. 2007. ISBN 978-0-9795261-0-7.

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## References

## External links

- *Rolling Stone at the Encyclopædia Britannica*

Official website

Rolling Stone at the Encyclopædia Britannica