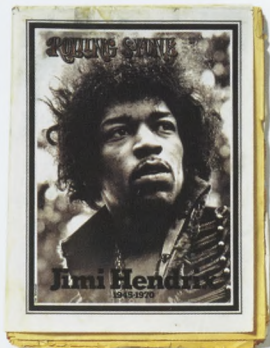


LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN THE NONPERFORMER CATEGORY



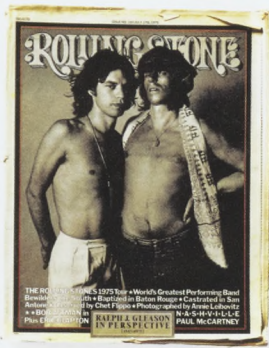
RS 1, November 9, 1967



RS 68, October 15, 1970



RS 81, April 29, 1971



RS 191, July 17, 1975



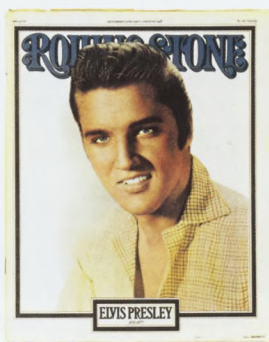
RS 193, August 14, 1975



RS 215, June 17, 1976



RS 219, August 12, 1976



RS 248, September 22, 1977

Jann S. Wenner

By Cameron Crowe

THERE ARE SOME WHO SAY ROCK & ROLL, AT ITS VERY CORE, is a temporary form. Even in the earliest days of rock & roll, it was all folly, right? Passionate and cheeky melodies meant to be heard crackling over a car radio, a souvenir of a night spent dancing or making out. Every real musician or fan knew, though, that rock & roll was much deeper than that. Rock & roll was code, and just under the surface was the promise of rebellion, of a life beyond what your parents could understand. It was a secret world to smuggle into your home, shut your door and get lost in.

It took a fleet of guitarists and pianists to put that secret world together, but one man realized rock & roll needed a diary and a journal. In 1967, with borrowed money and the support of a veteran jazz journalist named Ralph J. Gleason, a twenty-year-old dropout from UC Berkeley put together a folded paper, a publication that lent a tiny bit of permanence to all that timelessly “disposable” art. And on that day, Jann Wenner took the first step on the famously long, strange trip that would lead him to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

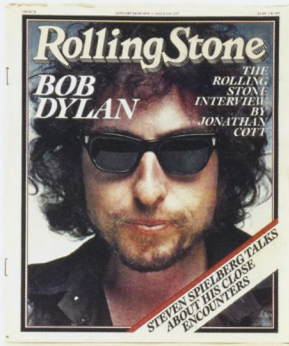
I never thought I’d meet him, much less find a way to join the small army of writers who were taken in to the rarefied community of late-sixties and early-seventies rock. To be a

writer for *Rolling Stone* back then was an early form of imbedded journalism. David Felton would disappear for weeks into the bizarre, baroque world of Brian Wilson in his sandbox years. Robert Greenfield was invited to the South of France, where Keith Richards explained the savage dynamic between the Stones, the women they shared, his relationship with Mick. And Jann Wenner himself, in groundbreaking conversations with Bob Dylan and in the spectacularly frank 1970

post-Beatles interview with John Lennon, would function as part literate fan, part therapist — establishing the *Rolling Stone* Interview as the new standard, rejecting prefabricated celebrity responses for no-bullshit truth telling. There was nothing like it before — and many imitators since. Here in the pages of that biweekly newspaper/magazine was a tearful Lennon discussing his childhood, sorting through his thorny partnership with Paul McCartney. Everyone from Dylan to Nixon communicated through *Rolling Stone*. And everybody sure said *fuck* a lot!

I saw my first issue displayed in a glass case in a head shop near my school-bus stop with a sign that said **MUST BE 18 TO PURCHASE**. I was pretty much a goner, right then and there. The tradition of lawyers in my family was over on the spot. Jann Wenner’s magazine went straight to my heart. I wanted





RS 257, January 26, 1978



RS 270, July 27, 1978



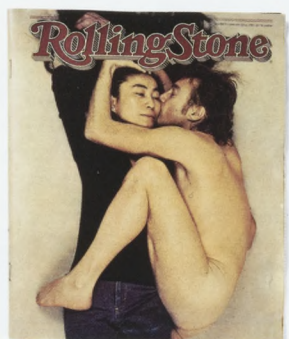
RS 294, June 28, 1979



RS 320, June 26, 1980



RS 325, September 4, 1980



RS 335, January 22, 1981



RS 432, October 11, 1984



RS 498, April 23, 1987

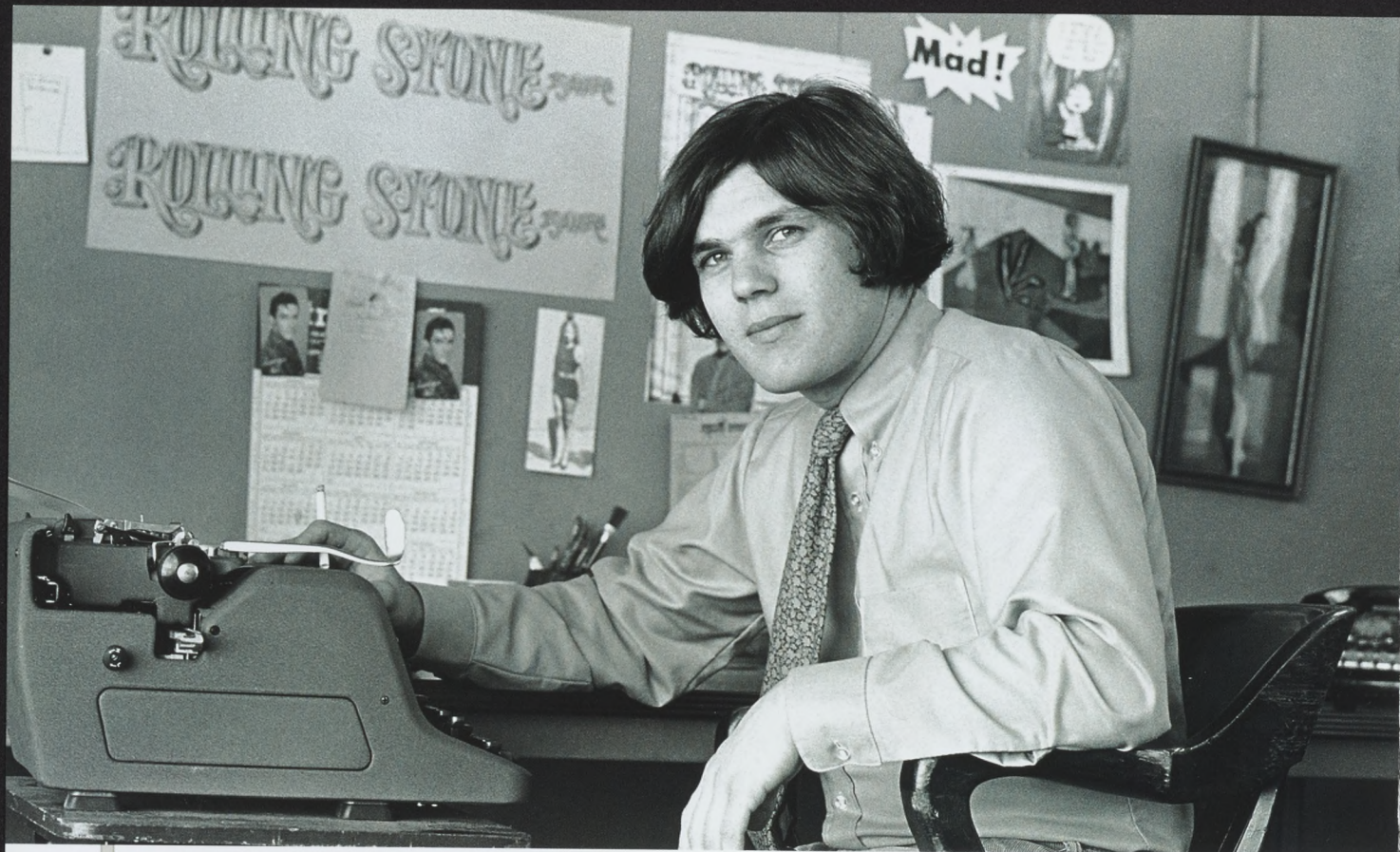
to be a journalist, but not just any kind of journalist, *this kind*. Every other Tuesday was a magnificent day, because it meant a new issue. Like rock & roll itself, *Rolling Stone* was a rare and private thrill. And like me, rock fans were sprouting deeper feelings and feeding their passion with editor Jann Wenner's smuggled messages from the front. It was clear even then that Wenner pored over and sculpted every word in the magazine.

THE MAGAZINE'S SCUFFLING DAYS DIDN'T LAST LONG. With implicit support from the heroes of rock, from Hendrix to Wenner's clear favorites – Jagger, Lennon and Dylan – the magazine caught fire. I was lucky enough to meet music editor Ben Fong-Torres at a Rolling Stones concert in 1973. Because it was dark, I was sure he hadn't noticed I was fifteen, and we began a phone relationship that turned into my first assignment. I'd cornered Kris Kristofferson after a show in San Diego, and the amiable songwriter had invited me to a bar with his wife Rita Coolidge and her family. The bar owner tossed me out immediately, creating a confrontation with Kristofferson that almost ended in a brawl. Kristofferson patiently sat in a leather chair outside the saloon's door and told me stories about Dylan from the set of their just-finished movie, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. The stories were published in *Random Notes*, and suddenly I was a stringer for my favorite magazine. One day, the galleys of my review of a Joe Walsh and Barnstorm concert were returned to me from the San Francisco office. There was a ballpoint-pen message in the margin: "Cameron . . . good work . . . your stuff is getting better. . . Jann." I tacked it to the wall of my room, next to all the records that had come to rule my life and my future.

Wenner at work with the tools of the trade, 1997

Soon I was offered a very controversial assignment on the one band that had always rejected the magazine's overtures for an interview: Led Zeppelin. *Rolling Stone* had panned the band's first album with a dismissive review, and word had it that guitarist/founder Jimmy Page held it personally against





"The best writing is personal, and it takes a stand"

Jann Wenner. I held a *Los Angeles Times* assignment to tour with the band for a news piece, but Ben Fong-Torres told me, "If you can talk the band into an interview for *Rolling Stone*, you've got the cover."

I'll spare you the curse-inflected vehemence with which the band said no to the idea of an interview with *Rolling Stone*. Still, I recorded long conversations with all the members except Page, and the *Rolling Stone* debate continued, almost as a band sport, over three weeks. (The concerned calls from my mom turned up in *Almost Famous*. Jann generously granted me full usage of the magazine's archives and floor plans for the movie, though today he asks that I stress that "we never killed an entire story as depicted, that was just a good plot turn.") Finally, standing on the band's private starship somewhere over North Carolina, Jimmy Page relented. "Fuck it," he said. "You've outlasted me. But I'm doing this for *you*, not Jann Wenner!" (Page would show up

for the cover-photo session holding a bouquet of dead roses. Years later, he and Wenner finally buried the hatchet... I think.) I sent the interviews to the magazine and awaited word from San Francisco. Sure enough, Ben called to say the story was going to be the magazine's next cover, and he had a simple additional message.

"Jann wants to meet you," he said. "Can you fly here tomorrow?"

Meeting Jann was sure to be sensational. He'd been famously characterized in the pages of the magazine and elsewhere—charismatic, charming, tough, loyal, mercurial. I was ready for anything. Ben picked me up at the airport, and I'm positive he could see my beaming face a mile away. I popped into his car and immediately sensed a tone of utter gravity. "It's not a good day for Jann," he said. "Ralph Gleason died."

Gleason was a San Francisco institution, a media presence and a columnist and one of the first established journalists to spot talents like Lenny Bruce, Bob Dylan and Jann himself. Clearly, the fifty-eight-year-old Gleason had functioned not only as an investor in *Rolling Stone* but as a father figure and mentor to Wenner. I offered to return home, but Ben insisted I come to the office. Wenner still wanted to talk to me. Ben led me to the corner office, and there was Jann, looking unlike any photo I'd ever seen of him. On that day, he was the oldest-looking young man I'd ever seen, a solitary

The original office, logo and typewriter



RS 591, November 15, 1990



RS 606, June 13, 1991



RS 616, October 31, 1991



RS 639, September 17, 1992

Crowe, Wenner, Howard Kohn (front row), Fong-Torres, Dave Marsh, Joe Klein, Peter Herbst (second row), Charles M. Young (third row)

presence at his round wooden table with a three-quarter-full bottle of vodka sitting in front of him. It was early afternoon.

"Hiya," he said with an ache. We shook hands, and I could see that he'd been crying. "I wanted to talk with you a bit, but I'm about to go home." For a few minutes, he spoke of the enormous loss he felt, losing Ralph, feeling so alone, still referring to Gleason in the present tense.

"Listen," he finally said. "We're running your piece, but I think you missed the story." My heart sank. "You clearly love the band, but you wrote what *they* wanted you to write, not what *you* wanted to write about them." It was not what I expected. "What did you see? What did you feel?" I explained that I'd wanted to land those interviews for the magazine. "Well, you did that, and thank you. But what does this piece mean to you as a *real* writer?" He loaned me his copy of Joan Didion's *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*. "Read her profile of Jim Morrison. Read the whole book! It's going to inspire you. The best writing – the best music – is personal, and it takes a stand.

"Did you take a stand?"

YEARS LATER, I STILL HAVEN'T RETURNED THE BOOK, IT'S ON THE shelf near my writing desk. A reminder. A standard. A challenge. A souvenir. A lasting gift of inspiration from Jann, given on his own worst day. That's the art of the man, and the art of the job.

Under Jann Wenner's daily watch as editor and publisher, *Rolling Stone* came to expand the very meaning of rock & roll. As the magazine's coverage stressed, rock & roll also included personal politics and freedom, global corruption, holding politicians accountable, and investigative journalism. *Rolling Stone* itself made headlines with many of its cover stories. In 1975, *Rolling Stone* reporters Howard Kohn and David Weir managed to infiltrate the underground world of the SLA and its famous captive-turned-militant Patty Hearst. Jann called the two-part cover story, entitled "The Inside Story," "the scoop of the seventies." It had been a secret project, shepherded by Wenner, and by coincidence I'd visited the San Francisco office on the day the piece broke. News cameras were parked outside the front door. The hallways of the magazine were electric with excitement – Jann's labor of love was now at the center of a global media explosion. "All the news that fits" – indeed. *Rolling Stone's* deep-inside account of Hearst's abduction, travels and conversion to "Tania" made headlines in every country and led all three national news broadcasts. *Rolling Stone* again led the pack with its investigation of the mysterious death of Karen Silkwood, a gripping story by Howard Kohn that later became a major motion picture starring Meryl Streep and Cher.

Rock & roll was also the startling work of photographer Annie Leibovitz – portraits from inside the eye of the hurricane. In 1970, the twenty-year-old art student became the magazine's second chief photographer, coming after original staff photographer Baron Wolman. Her first major assignment was accompanying Jann to New York to photograph John Lennon for a two-part *Rolling Stone* Interview. Jann has called her Lennon portrait on the January 21, 1971, cover "a defining moment for the magazine and Annie's work as a photographer." Ever



ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

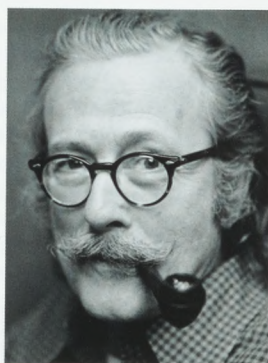
The magazine's scuffling days didn't last long

since, he's kept the stark black-and-white portrait of Lennon in a frame on his desk. Five years later, Jann and Annie visited the studio of the great master, Richard Avedon, who inspired her with his more formal style of working. Avedon himself would photograph an award-winning portfolio for *Rolling Stone*, entitled "The Family," which included America's major politicians and corporate bosses, labor leaders and presidents, and behind-the-scenes figures like Rose Kennedy and Rose Mary Woods. The 1976 special issue won the National Magazine Award, an achievement that has been repeated many times since.

In addition, rock & roll was the explosive and often humorous journalistic voices of writers like Jon Landau, P.J. O'Rourke, Charles M. Young, Joe Eszterhas, Lester Bangs, Dave Marsh and Greil Marcus. In Hunter S. Thompson, the magazine found its celebrated patron saint of "gonzo journalism." ("The Mark Twain of his time," says Wenner today.) Thompson's coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign for *Rolling Stone* was the birth of a new kind of reportage, razor-sharp political commentary that read like *Exile on Main Street*. It was Wenner who edited Thompson's classic *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*, both of which debuted as

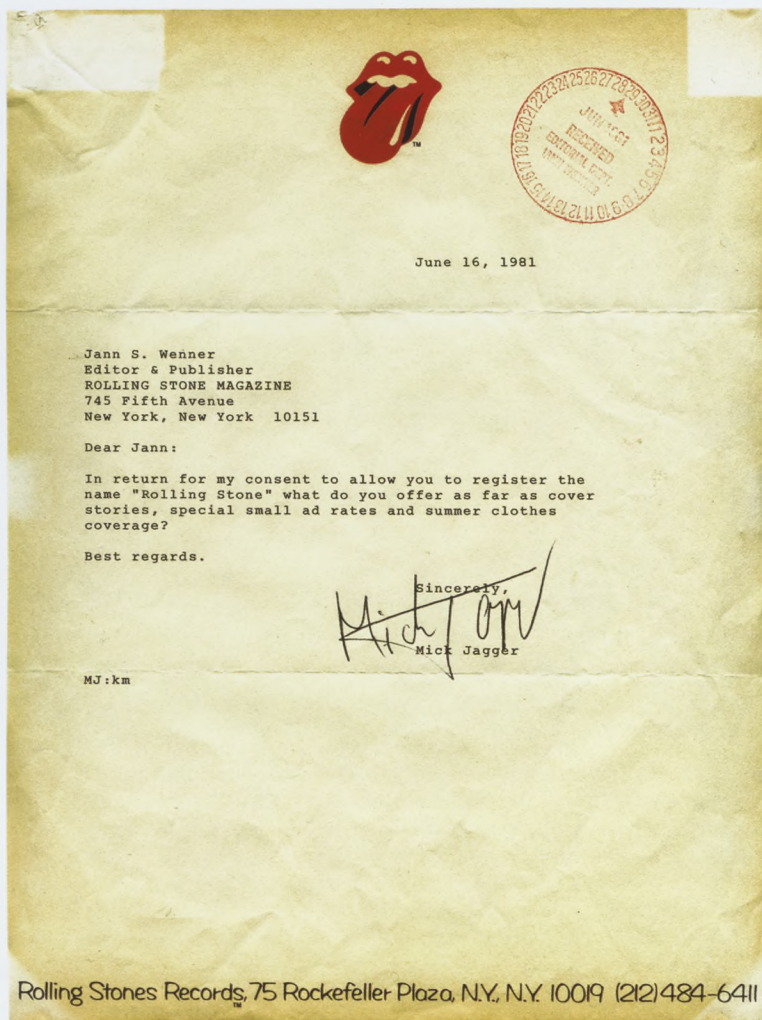
pieces for the magazine. Soon, future presidents would sit for *Rolling Stone* Interviews, sharing space with Van Morrison and Keith Richards.

Always hands-on, Wenner continually nurtured the personal voices of those writers. The purpose and influence of rock & roll journalism grew. Within that circle of editors and contributors, the jockeying for space and attention was fierce. Such was the style of Wenner's leadership and intuition to know that, as with all the best bands, competition made our work better. From one office door, Joe Eszterhas might emerge confidently with a new piece, and just down the hall, an early fax machine might be buzzing with – or without – Hunter Thompson's latest report from worlds beyond. (Thompson rarely socialized with the other journalists, calling us "sportswriters" – ironic, considering that



ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Cofounder Ralph J. Gleason



Perhaps this letter explains Jagger's status as most frequent 'RS' cover subject.

thirty years later, he's now a regular online sports columnist for ESPN.) Despite *Rolling Stone's* dedication to covering the panorama of all that was reckless and wild, Wenner campaigned tirelessly for absolute accuracy and an impartial point of view. There was a sense of fun – which spilled over into extracurricular activities like the *Rolling Stone* softball team, which had a fierce rivalry going with a team consisting of the Eagles and their buddies. (Check out the sense of athletic

prohess and entitlement in our team portrait on the previous page! We lost, unfortunately, but we did have the memories of Hunter prowling the hotel hallways the night before in a dress and football helmet – he never made it to the game.)

But there was also absolute big-league professionalism around the office, and even Wenner's assistant would offer a very dry reading of words that we all pretended we were too pro to react to, even though they struck thunder into our well-honed no-big-deal demeanor:

"Jann, it's John Lennon on line two."

(Behind closed doors we used to marvel – not just that Wenner had a close relationship with Lennon but that they were close enough to have an often stormy relationship! None of this cordial shit; these were heavy dudes.)

The magazine has always placed great value in conscience and social justice as part of the rock & roll experience, championing artists like Jackson Browne, Don Henley and Bruce Springsteen in their efforts to spotlight issues ahead of easy career choices. (Dylan was the figurehead, notes Wenner, "and still is.")

"There are magazines that make a difference," Wenner told Charlie Rose just last year, "that have a voice in this country and a place in the national dialogue. I enjoy having a place at the table." The chairman of Wenner Media still presides over the magazine with an idiosyncratic artist's touch, walking the halls like an enthusiastic and exacting patriarch, inspiring loyalty from a large, and sometimes dysfunctional, family. Normal work hours didn't exist then, and they don't exist now. Music flows from the offices. Wenner's San Francisco labor of love is now famously housed in Manhattan, and, yes, it's true, Jacqueline Onassis used to visit the New York office, strolling by Pete Townshend's smashed Gibson guitar and cubicles buzzing with the music of the Clash and the Sex Pistols. Such is the pop-culture explosion that still powers the magazine, and Jann Wenner. Even today, *Rolling Stone* is a personal endeavor and a privately held company.



Pete Townshend shows his appreciation for five stars



Old compadres: Bob Dylan and Jann Wenner – forever young

Cutting the ribbon with Yoko Ono while Little Richard, Paul Shaffer, Seymour Stein and others look on, September 1995

"I never wanted to build an empire," he told Rose. "What I knew how to do was edit. I'm a rock & roll fan with an interest in the world we're living in. I always thought that rock & roll spoke more honestly than many people could, that it would matter in the future of this country and the way we would lead our lives." He offered a music lover's smile. "Lo and behold, we were right."

He still writes for his own magazine, too. Wenner's own journalism is some of the magazine's most personal and best. Sparked by the cultural events he follows so closely, you sense he sometimes grabs the yellow legal tablet, or keyboard, and out of him pours the same rock & roll spirit that launched the magazine. His essays on subjects as diverse as Lennon's death, AIDS and 9/11 are consistent and timely reminders of *Rolling Stone's* ongoing sense of authentic passion. Over the past twenty or so years, he's nurtured more young lions of music journalism who've helped to maintain *Rolling Stone's* standard of excellence. Anthony DeCurtis, Kurt Loder, Mikal Gilmore, James Henke (now curator of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum) and David Fricke are among the well-known scribes who cut their teeth at *Rolling Stone*. Following in Annie Leibovitz's footsteps, the inventive Mark Seliger, who became the magazine's third chief photographer, in the early nineties, helped keep the magazine the talk of the town with his witty – and sometimes startling – covers. As more than a few artists have admitted, when posing for *Rolling Stone* – and particularly the cover – the stakes rise, the bullshit disappears, something happens... and often the image is never forgotten.

EVEN WHILE OVERSEEING A NEW GENERATION OF MUSIC journalists, Jann still found time to become an integral force in establishing the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and its striking home in Cleveland. There are other magazines in Wenner's arsenal now, as well, *Men's Journal* and *Us Weekly*, but the Wenner of today is clearly a family man, the doting father of three sons. Yet he still guides all the coverage, still invests in the late-night deadlines and stays ferociously up to date with his first love – music. He's dined with presidents and traveled on Air Force One, but you sense he's more excited about tickets to the Rolling Stones, or discussing the compelling future of rock in the work of artists like Eminem, or cracking open a copy of Bob Dylan's followup to *Love and Theft* or cohosting an event like tonight's.

From recent pieces like *Rolling Stone's* inventive coverage of Video Game University and the best-seller "Fast Food Nation" to its cover-fueled role in the rise of Britney as Icon, the magazine remains firmly at the center of pop culture. Purists may sometimes take issue with the presence of a passing sensation on the cover – that's part of the fun – but the heart of *Rolling Stone* is also regularly on display when rock & roll is at a crossroads. From the birth of hip-hop

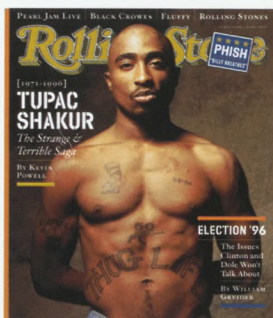


When posing for 'Rolling Stone,' the stakes rise

culture to the death of a legend like Elvis, Jann's carefully crafted coverage always rises to the challenge with the kind of in-depth reporting that reminds you that *Rolling Stone* is still one-stop shopping for the final word on the matter. The Presley tribute issue, which remains one of the magazine's greatest, was the first produced in New York following the magazine's 1977 move. Presley died just five days after the relocation, so Jann and the staff shelved the originally planned special issue celebrating *Rolling Stone's* new home. Jann wrote in his editor's note, "We pushed deadlines back and worked around the clock, never doubting for a minute that he was worth it. Elvis was the first king we ever had."

The magazine's recent heartfelt tributes to George Harrison and Johnny Cash are further indelible examples of *Rolling Stone's* sense of history. Some magazines exist for page flipping, a brief stopover on their way to the recycling bin. *Rolling Stone*, on those occasions and others, you keep. "We are devoted to that vision of society," Jann said recently, "that rock & roll is the most compelling dialogue in America."

As with all great ideas, it's hard to imagine a world without *Rolling Stone* and the instincts of Jann Wenner. For every musician or music fan who felt the fire and gained that greater sense of destiny by reading *Rolling Stone*, I say to Jann now: Thank you for dropping out, for leaving those persistent phone messages for Bob Dylan asking for that early interview, for forging the bond with Ralph Gleason that pushed you both beyond the boundaries of excellence way back then, for showing up at work tomorrow with that same sense of wonder and commitment to rock & roll and for taking a stand – always, with one hand waving free. □



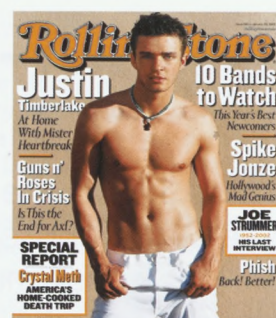
RS 746, October 31, 1996



RS 752, January 23, 1997



RS 810, April 15, 1999



RS 914, January 23, 2003