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PERIODICALS

Rolling Stone's Rock World

Uncertainties abound in the publishing business, but one fact seems tantalizingly obvious: there are millions of potential readers for publications aimed at the 18-to-25 age bracket. But how to reach them? One method is to hire professionals to turn out smooth articles in hip lingo in a psychedelic or Art Nouveau layout ("Talking to kids in their own language," it's called). *Cheetah* and *Eye* magazines tried that—and folded. Another approach is to realize that today's youngsters tend to detect false notes and are not readily dazzled by packaging, so the publisher simply lets young writers have their say in blunt, unaffected prose on plain, tabloid-sized newsprint. *Rolling Stone*, the San Francisco-based rock-'n'-roll newspaper-magazine, is doing well by doing just that.

Free to Knock. *Stone's* 23-year-old editor, Jann (pronounced Yahn) Wenner, insists that he did not start the biweekly journal to grab a market, but simply to write about the things that interested him most. "We're not tied to anybody but ourselves—we're not promoting somebody else's trip," he says. What interests *Stone's* writers is the whole rock world. Their staple is music, but they increasingly offer news and views on the entire life-style that rock shapes.

Started 18 months ago, with just \$8,000 and a staff made up largely of part-time volunteers, *Rolling Stone* has already moved comfortably into the black, employs twelve people full-time, and claims a circulation of about 60,000. It will begin printing in London this month to serve its 7,000 British readers more promptly. In the rock-music world,

CAREY WINFREY



WENNER OF "STONE"
Even work can be fun.

its influence is immense: recent praise of an unknown Texas blues guitarist named Johnny Winter impressed Columbia Records, which, after hearing him, gave him a \$600,000 contract. Most of *Stone's* ad revenue (\$70,000 last year, and rapidly rising) comes from record companies, but its reviewers have felt free to knock such hot-selling performers as Janis Joplin, Aretha Franklin and The Doors.

While Editor Wenner considers his paper part of the "youth revolution," he does not automatically accept every part of the youth scene. When young people and police clashed in Palm Springs, Calif., during an Easter vacation pop festival, *Stone* largely ignored the music in favor of first-rate reporting of the violence. It even had kind words for the cops, who "exercised amazing restraint, ignoring the blatant sexual activities, drinking and doping," until, finally, "the youthful vacationers asked for much of the trouble they got." *Stone* does not condone the kind of activity that got Singer Jim Morrison charged with indecent exposure during a Miami concert, although the paper ran a typically wry headline: MORRISON'S PENIS IS INDECENT. The paper startled its readers by attacking the yippies just before the 1968 Democratic Convention for proposing "methods and means as corrupt as the political machine they hope to disrupt."

Energy Core. *Stone* was the first publication to probe the misuse of funds for the Monterey Pop Festival and to explore the obsessions of "the groupies," girls who chase rock performers into bed (*TIME*, Feb. 28). This month, the paper devoted 20 pages to an examination of the "American Revolution in 1969." A summary article by Ralph J. Gleason, 52, a veteran rock specialist and *Stone's* only elder contributor, accused many radicals of harboring "a death wish" and warned: "You better figure out how to make a revolution without killing people, or it won't work." He suggested poetry and music as recourses. "The Beatles aren't just more popular than Jesus, they are also more potent than the S.D.S."

The notion that life, and even work, can be fun, pervades *Rolling Stone's* airy offices. "We've reversed the priorities," says Wenner. "We have a good time first and a viable business second." Wenner was a student at Berkeley when the Free Speech Movement disrupted the campus, and he helped report it for NBC. He wrote a rock column for the campus *Daily Californian*, later for *Ramparts*, before starting *Stone*. While both he and his paper freely use four-letter words, and he wears his hair long and shaggy, he is not a stereotype rebel. "Rock and roll is now the energy core of change in American life," he argues. "But capitalism is what allows us the incredible indulgence of this music."