On the Cover of *Rolling Stone*: What the Faces of Rock ’n’ Roll Say about Music’s Most Popular Magazine

A thesis presented to

the faculty of

the Scripps College of Communication of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree:

Master of Science

Mariel M. Betancourt

March 2008
This thesis titled

On the Cover of Rolling Stone: What the Faces of Rock ’n’ Roll Say

about Music’s Most Popular Magazine

by

MARIEL M. BETANCOURT

has been approved for

the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism

and the Scripps College of Communication by

Joseph P. Bernt

Professor of Journalism

Gregory J. Shepherd

Dean, Scripps College of Communication
ABSTRACT

BETANCOURT, MARIEL M., M.S., March 2008, Journalism

On the Cover of Rolling Stone: What the Faces of Rock ’n’ Roll Say about Music’s Most Popular Magazine (65 pp.)

Director of Thesis: Joseph P. Bernt

This thesis, based on a content analysis of Rolling Stone covers from 1967 to 2007, examines changes in the magazine’s most famous image throughout time. Journalists have argued Rolling Stone magazine’s coverage has changed noticeably since its debut, but often failed to support these claims with concrete evidence. This study presents one concrete means of talking about changes in musical focus through time; it compares the Hot 100 Billboard musical charts and Rolling Stone’s cover artists to examine the influence of the charts on the cover. It also considers gender, race, and occupation of cover artists to document how the diversity of cover subjects has developed since the magazine’s founding as well.

Approved: __________________________________________________________

Joseph P. Bernt

Professor of Journalism
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Joseph Bernt and Dr. Daniel Riffe for the invaluable assistance, encouragement, and inspiration they provided as my professors and in the development of this thesis. I am extremely grateful for the support and training I received as a graduate student at the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism and extend my sincere thanks to all faculty.

I would also like to thank my husband, Vince Jungkunz, who — even while finishing a dissertation of his own — offered such wholehearted support for this project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................ iii

Acknowledgments......................................................................................... iv

List of Tables................................................................................................. vi

Chapter 1: Introduction................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature............................................................. 7

Chapter 3: Method........................................................................................... 20

Chapter 4: Results.......................................................................................... 24

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion........................................................... 37

References...................................................................................................... 47

Appendix A: Coder Instructions................................................................. 52

Appendix B: Coding Sheet............................................................................. 58
## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Occupation of *Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects, 1967 to 2007.................25
Table 2: Occupation of *Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects, by Decade, 1967 to 2007.....26
Table 3: Musicians with Top Hits Pictured on the *Rolling Stone* Cover,
    by Decade, 1967 to 2007.................................................................27
Table 4: *Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects with Top Hits, 1967 to 2007, by Decade......28
Table 5: Gender and Race of *Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects, 1967 to 2007...........30
Table 6: *Rolling Stone* Individual Cover Subjects with Top Hits,
    by Race and Gender, 1967 to 2007..................................................32
Table 7: *Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects by Gender and Decade, 1967 to 2007.......33
Table 8: *Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects by Race and Decade, 1967 to 2007...........34
Table 9: *Rolling Stone* Issues with Coverlines about Charting Artists,
    by Decades, 1967 to 2007.................................................................36
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The year was 1967. It was the year that introduced the world to Jimi Hendrix, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and “Light My Fire.” It was also the year a 21-year-old music lover named Jann Wenner gave birth to a magazine known as *Rolling Stone* — so named in honor of a band, a song and, not least of all, the idea that movement, change, could keep one young. Created on a borrowed $7,500, *Rolling Stone* was the first publication to successfully address the interests of a generation that discussed rock and roll music with a seriousness and passion until then reserved for the art of the earlier generations, such as jazz or opera.

*Rolling Stone* understood and exploited the fact that for its most fervent followers, rock and roll was not just a music, but a lifestyle with its own dress, social customs, myths, and, of course, royalty. In its early years *Rolling Stone* served as the newspaper of record for freaks and hippies concerned with free concerts, free drugs, and free love. Groupies received attention in a cover story of their own; readers received roach clips with a paid subscription; and mainstream media received a tremendous shock when the little magazine that could, once staffed solely with volunteers and housed in a ramshackle loft above a San Francisco printing press, grew to become a Fifth Avenue enterprise worth more than $250 million.

Quickly establishing itself as the “voice of the counterculture,” *Rolling Stone* was a magazine that gave the revolution — people more likely to protest against the Vietnam War than to follow the “straight” press — a place to express itself (Draper, 1990). At the time, its coverage of rock and roll was a novel idea; *Rolling Stone’s* closest competitors,
*Crawdaddy!* and *Creem*, appeared on the scene in 1966 and 1969, respectively. All three offered an alternative to the mainstream media voices, which didn’t understand the heroes of the time and showed their age by printing articles such as “Jimi Hendrix: Obscene or Vulgar? Or a Good Musician?” (Draper, 1990, p. 59).

Even then, in 1968, *Rolling Stone*’s hold on its target audience was such that it had the power to create stars and make careers. This is even more surprising considering the lack of resources available to its relatively inexperienced staff: The magazine debuted as a cheap newsprint affair with black-and-white photos; the writers were young, on drugs, and terribly idealistic; office supplies and desks were not necessarily provided for them. But the mention of unknown, unsigned guitarist Johnny Winter in an article about Texas music led to a $300,000 record deal with Columbia (“Rocking the News,” 1969). *Rolling Stone* was irreverent, but it took its youth culture seriously — giving criticism and praise to its musical gods as it deemed fit — and so earned its respect.

*Rolling Stone* grew — so quickly and so successfully — because like the counterculture it emulated it was a vital, youthful, and easily evolving force. Just as it targeted one generation so successfully, when this generation saw itself change, the magazine redefined its content, its staff, and its parent company. Early on, some of the changes reflected ideological shifts. The 1960s idealism suffered a blow with the 1969 concert at Altamonte, which had resulted in the murder of one, accidental killing of three, and abuse of countless others at the hands of the Hell’s Angels, who had been hired to provide concert security. Wenner and the *Rolling Stone* staff reported the full story, which few in the mainstream press dared do, and won a National Magazine Award for
their efforts. The mood, both throughout the nation and the *Rolling Stone* office changed. Only two years later, Wenner would proclaim, in marked contrast to his earlier attitude, “Rock and roll obviously will not ‘save the world,’ nor is it for everybody ‘the music that will set you free’” (Anson, 1981, p. 158).

Other changes were political. During the Seventies, rock music and politics began to mix like never before, leading Wenner to tell his editors, “Politics will be the rock and roll of the Seventies” (Anson, 1981, p. 185). The 1976 campaign saw competition for rock star endorsements, and Jimmy Carter not only quoted Bob Dylan, but also held fundraisers with the help of Capricorn Records president Phil Walden and the Allman Brothers. Wenner sent gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson and a rather green reporter, Timothy Crouse, on the campaign trail; Crouse returned with the material for his best seller, *The Boys on the Bus*, while Thompson reported on the campaign with such brutal honesty that the rest of the press could only admire him. *Rolling Stone* saw itself changing with the times as well: As women championed their equal rights, the secretaries and assistants who endured sexist remarks while completing menial work began to demand opportunities as editors, copy chiefs, and fact-checkers.

As the magazine grew, Wenner invested in other ventures, including the failed *Earth Times* magazine and a more successful book publishing division. In 1977 Wenner moved his empire to sleek, glossy New York from free-wheeling San Francisco — which in itself signaled a significant ideological shift that met with some resistance from the *Rolling Stone* staff. Within the newsroom, the battles waged were sometimes bitterly fought. Wenner’s proposals for the magazine’s first Reserve Office Training Corps
advertising contract and focus groups to influence content were met with protests and moans of embarrassment by the more radical staff (Draper, 1990). Other changes to lure — or attempt to lure — new audiences distressed the magazine’s reporters. In the early 1980s, a *Rolling Stone* advertising campaign contrasted the “perception” versus the “reality” of who read its pages. The magazine was no longer catering to hippies who drove Volkswagen buses and voted for George McGovern, the advertisements cheekily announced; instead, the campaign portrayed the typical reader as a Mustang-driving, Reagan-loving yuppie.

All these changes have prompted speculation about the magazine’s health and future. No matter the decade, journalists have monitored the health of *Rolling Stone* based on the same vital signs: is *Rolling Stone* making a profit? Who is reading *Rolling Stone*? Is it catering to the youth or the 1960s generation it first targeted? Has it “sold out”? This term, as used by the journalists, often implies that the magazine has abandoned one area of coverage in favor of a more popular, mainstream one. *Rolling Stone* fought charges it had sold out as early as 1969, when former staffer Michael Lyndon complained, “*Rolling Stone* has lost the battle to be a newspaper independent of the whole music-entertainment industry” (“Rocking the News,” 1969, p. 90). In 1981, *New York* noted rock and roll in *Rolling Stone* had been “dethroned” in favor of a “trimmed-down, toned-up, and revamped magazine look” that would appeal to “older readers and corporate advertisers” (Nobile, 1981, p. 17). In the words of one writer, *Rolling Stone*’s “dilemma is one that has stalked the magazine since the death of the
counterculture that spawned it back in the late Sixties: how to reinvent itself with the
times while staying true to its traditional values?” (O’Hagan, 2002, p. 5).

In his book *Rolling Stone Magazine: The Uncensored History*, author Robert
Draper argues *Rolling Stone* may have been the first magazine to face charges of “selling
out” (1990, p. 20). Though this term is commonly used today to indicate a person or
group that is making money to the detriment of its product or creative output, its meaning
in the Sixties reflected a different set of values. There was a mainstream culture, and
there was a counterculture, and *Rolling Stone*’s writers and the musicians on the
magazine’s covers saw themselves as living, loving, and creating firmly within the latter
camp. The mainstream culture had its *New York Times*; *Rolling Stone* had no need to
either emulate this publication or follow in its footsteps, its staff believed:

No one wrestled with the notion of selling out as *Rolling Stone*’s employees did in
in the sixties and seventies. Every single change in the magazine … was subjected
to the kind of debate unimaginable to a young journalist of the nineties. Staffers
agonized over these matters as if nothing less than society itself hung in the
balance. … For these young men and women, both in the pages of *Rolling Stone*
and behind its office doors, were harbingers of a swirling new culture (Draper,
1990, p. 20).

Clearly, the idea of change is one that interests not only the writers and staff
working at *Rolling Stone*, but also the outside journalists who report on the magazine’s
ups and downs. This study took as its focus one piece of analysis, the *Rolling Stone*
cover, and examined what the cover subjects communicate about the magazine’s brand
and values and how this has changed through time. Specifically, this study argues that because Wenner wanted to create a successful magazine and a media empire that would rival Henry Luce’s *Time*, he couldn’t afford to entirely ignore the mainstream voices in the music industry at any point in *Rolling Stone*’s history. The idea that Wenner pursued the perfect cover almost as a scientific endeavor inspired this study, which examined the relationship between top charting artists, as determined by the Hot 100 Billboard charts, and the artists chosen to appear in the pictures and coverlines on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. As an arbiter of cool, the magazine believes it defines rock and roll; this study asked both “How do the charts (forces beyond *Rolling Stone*’s control) shape its cover?” and “How does the cover shape rock and roll?”
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In his book *Gone Crazy and Back Again: The Rise and Fall of the Rolling Stone Generation*, Robert Sam Anson argued that Wenner is the archetypal 1960s hero: one who, faced with an uncertain future, searches, samples, and “settles on rock” as the answer (1981, p. xvi). Given this interpretation, it seems natural that much of the material written about *Rolling Stone* charts this progression, while also analyzing the forces that led to the magazine’s rapid growth and success.

Both Anson’s book and Draper’s *Rolling Stone Magazine: The Uncensored History* provide comprehensive and chronological histories of the magazine, and concern themselves at great length with the business decisions Wenner made that altered *Rolling Stone*’s content, philosophy, and profits. Specifically, Draper’s work provides detailed accounts of the business battles waged in the newsroom over what sort of advertising to accept, for example. In this book Wenner emerges as a ruthless, cunning businessman, and Draper pushes the theory that he cared more about success than the integrity of the magazine. For example, Draper documents Wenner’s lack of concern about the magazine’s first ROTC contract and his creation of focus groups to determine which artists would appear on *Rolling Stone*’s cover. Similarly, Anson’s book shows how Wenner, unlike many of his peers, did not embrace the hippie lifestyle and the communal life of shared resources. From the beginning, Anson notes, Wenner advocated responsible decision-making within a capitalistic framework. It is a difference noted in subtle and not-so-subtle details: “The jeans he wears are always freshly pressed,” Anson notes. “He would like very much to be a success” (1981, p. 18). These works provide an
explanation as to why Wenner would choose to devote attention to popular artists in
Rolling Stone. To put it simply, these artists sell.

Fred Goodman, a former Rolling Stone writer and author of The Mansion on the
Hill; Dylan, Young, Geffen, Springsteen and Head-On Collision of Rock and Commerce,
argues that Rolling Stone has such close ties to the music industry that it functions as little
more than a trade magazine (1998). Goodman’s book traces how rock and roll grew to
become a multimillion-dollar industry and argues that Rolling Stone’s role is not different
than that of Billboard magazine or “fawning” mainstream publications:

Despite its early alliance with the overtly left-wing underground press, as rock
moved to the mainstream and became largely indistinguishable from the
increasingly formidable music business, the rock press — like the artists — took
more and more of its cues from the record companies, which were always ready
to aid in the preparation of a story by doling out meals, plane tickets, and hotel
rooms (p. 350).

Goodman believes the magazine lost some of its autonomy as rock music grew in
popularity. He also notes that several writers had extremely close ties to the music
industry and should have refrained from writing certain stories. Rolling Stone music critic
Jon Landau reviewed the debut album by the J. Geils Band, though he’d once worked as
an adviser and producer for the band, Goodman notes. These observations suggest that
Rolling Stone has followed the industry’s lead in its coverage, sometimes in an
unscrupulous manner.
These sources promote the idea that, on a certain level, the magazine followed the lead of music industry, and not the other way around. They create a picture somewhat at odds with the magazine’s (and editor’s) carefully crafted image as a rebel, an iconoclast, and an alternative to other media sources. The magazine’s conservative values and acceptance of the status quo are expressed in other ways as well. Even as Wenner embraced performers such as Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, he established a hierarchy for his staff along the lines of race and gender. Though he devotes little examination to race in his book (a telling omission in itself), Draper does include one noteworthy anecdote:

In particular, its reluctance to cover black music is infamous. (Not coincidentally, *Rolling Stone* has never employed a single black writer.) When black music critic Nelson George visited the magazine’s offices in the early eighties, he was startled by the sea of lily-white faces. “I thought I’d walked in on a California beach party,” he said (1990, p. 20).

Also, Draper notes, in the magazine’s early years, French poet Jean Genet, on behalf of the Black Panthers, told a *Rolling Stone* reporter, “Your magazine has great power with the youth audience. But it is not living up to its role.” Its coverage of the Chicago 8 was “paternalistic” and lacked “political or revolutionary arguments,” he went on (p. 125). It is no secret that women faced a particularly challenging struggle to gain equality in the newsroom as well:

It was difficult for a female employee to contemplate the *Rolling Stone* experience without thinking of opportunities withheld; of the business manager who
habitually brushed up against their backsides; of the accountant who urged
staffers to lean out their windows so as to witness a woman performing oral sex
on him in the parking lot; of the prohibitively macho conversations Scanlon,
Eszterhas and Cahill had at Jerry’s Inn about Hemingway and other suitable role
models; and of the reaction several male staffers gave to the hiring of Partridge:
“What does she look like? Does she have good legs?”(Draper, p. 217).

Though not surprising, given the values of the era, these early attitudes may have
influenced the magazine’s coverage at first and, later, changed in response to societal
demands for equality and shifts in consumer behaviors.

Though a product of an era known for certain values or behaviors, outside forces
such as the music industry or societal shifts have exerted pressure on and brought change
to *Rolling Stone* — and may have tipped it into a more conservative role within the
magazine world. Research into magazines and their life spans has shown that to survive,
a magazine must respond to paradoxical forces. On the one hand, it must maintain a
recognizable identity for the benefit of its established readership (Pool, 1983). On the
other hand, it must reposition itself as needed to prevent a decline in circulation or
advertising.

Despite an editor’s best attempts to capture vitality, magazines may enter an era
of inevitable decline. A magazine’s life cycle is often described as mirroring that of man,
with an infancy, childhood, adolescence, manhood, and middle age, an age of “stability
followed by gradual decline” (Kobak, 1976, p. 48). In the end, a magazine enters an old
age and proceeds toward death during a period “in which efforts at revival are sporadic
and tragically doomed” (Felker, 1969, p. 9). The phases can also be described as: development, growth, maturity, saturation, and decline and death (Van Zuilen, 1977).

*Rolling Stone* clearly has passed its teen years and exited the era of constant growth:

> In the maturity stage of the magazine’s life cycle, the rate of circulation and newsstand growth tends to decline slowly, although the aggregate growth may still be present. The prime reason for this is caused by the fact that the audience at which the magazine was aimed has largely been contacted and the essential demand for it has been satisfied. The problem is how to contact and get other potential readers (Van Zuilen, 1977, p. 276).

*Rolling Stone*’s most recent changes show Wenner is perhaps searching for such new audiences. In June 2002 he announced he would replace top editor Robert Love with the cheeky *For Him* magazine’s Ed Needham, which sparked media interest in the health of the publication. *Newsday* called *Rolling Stone* a “Stone Cold” magazine (Beckwith & Labossiere, 2002); Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times* asked, “Can *Rolling Stone* Be Trusted?” (2002); and Salon.com proposed the “Death of *Rolling Stone*” (Elder, 2002). Would Needham give *Rolling Stone* a makeover to resemble other “beer-and-babes” magazines, they wondered? Would he revitalize newsstand sales, which dropped 10 percent during the final months of 2001 (Carr, 2002)? Or would he simply help the magazine complete the final phase of its corporate sell-out?

Some journalists seemed to believe the latter would occur and predicted the magazine would suffer under Needham’s leadership. Shortly after Needham’s hiring and
the September 19, 2002, debut of a revamped design, writers throughout the nation bemoaned the loss of lengthy articles in *Rolling Stone*, the increasing number of covers featuring scantily clad actresses, and the lack of attention devoted to cutting-edge trends and musicians. As an example of the magazine’s crimes, Hilburn pointed out that *Rolling Stone*’s September 12, 2002, cover displayed a barely famous, half-naked co-star instead of “a far more noteworthy subject [profiled] in the same issue — turntable master DJ Shadow, whose ‘The Private Press’ is widely regarded as the best electronica album in ages” (2002, p. 1). The cover that followed, which hyped garage-rock’s revival, made Karla Peterson of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* laugh: “It’s a story that should have run months ago, making the new *Stone* look old from the start” (2002, p. D1). Anticipating the changes, even the decidedly unhip declared, “At 35, it seems even *Rolling Stone* is destined to follow trends, not set them” (“Trendsetter Settles Down,” 2002, p. 15). Said one source to the *Wall Street Journal*, “If you want to go to a magazine to really find what is new on the cutting edge of music I wouldn’t” recommend *Rolling Stone* (Lawton, 2002, p. B1).

The charge of “selling out,” which *Rolling Stone* has faced since its creation, is one that rock musicians also contend with through time. There are journalists who view any musician who experiences commercial success, often defined by appearances on the Billboard charts, such as the Hot 100 Billboard chart, as a “sell out.” The music world is one which supports entire subcultures defined by what they are not: “alternative music” is an alternative to the mainstream charts; “indie music” is independent of them. For these countercultures, legitimacy is defined by how many records the bands haven’t sold, how
many endorsements they haven’t made, and how small, or intimate, of a club they are able to play. As R.E.M., a popular alternative band of the late 1980s and 1990s, found itself increasingly more popular, as measured by the Hot 100 Billboard charts, journalists began what could only be described as a death watch for its creativity. In their eyes, it was a given the band would “sell out” once it “sold more.” One critic summed up the clash between two conflicting values this way:

Part of R.E.M.’s appeal is the band’s unwillingness to submit to various conventions within the music industry. The group has prided itself on developing a do-it-yourself reputation and on trying to maintain artistic independence in the face of commercial pressures (Conover, 1986, p. 51).

The band’s lead singer, Michael Stipe, described it as a conscious choice:

We felt from the very beginning that building up a grassroots following and letting it grow in a very slow, more organic manner was much more real than, say, putting out an album, having a hit single, being immediately popular with two million 16-year-old kids, and then having them drop your next album like a hot potato (Conover, p. 51).

Success is established as an either/or situation in which you are either independent or mainstream. Interestingly enough, these worlds can be sustained outside of mainstream charts and media; the music magazine Magnet (established in 1993) takes its cue from the independent music scene that eschews chart hits. It succeeds at covering bands who are not defined by their commercial success. Today, the argument about what constitutes a “sell out” has evolved further, raging on in a battle between “rockists” and “poptimists,”
with the former being those who favor and argue the superiority of certain pure forms of rock and the latter being those who think charting pop artists are as talented as any strictly defined rock adherents (Rosen, 2006).

While on the surface it may seem that *Rolling Stone* has changed drastically in the last years and sold out some of its original values, would an examination of the magazine’s coverage and mission throughout its 30-year history show evidence of a rapidly shifting corporate philosophy or devotion to a longstanding editorial formula? This study proposed that an examination of the music magazine’s relationship with the music industry through time was much more complex than some critics will admit.

A preliminary study by this author found the covers of *Rolling Stone* show not only a devotion to Hot 100 artists, but also revealed that a consistent formula seemed to be in use from year to year (Betancourt, 2004). Most artists who appeared on the cover photographs did have Hot 100 hits within the same year, and in the first full year of publication, 1968, *Rolling Stone* filled its cover pages with coverlines about and photographs of artists with top 10 hits. These top 10 artists, such as The Doors, The Beatles, and Jimi Hendrix, accounted for half the cover photographs that year. (Only two cover photographs featured artists who did not reach the Hot 100 charts: Bob Dylan and Frank Zappa.) Though some critics would like to believe the magazine has only now embraced the top 10 charts, the earlier study found the relationship between the two was at its peak in 1968.

The study also found that the 1968 cover photographs and coverlines ignored most of the artists on the top 10 charts; 12 of the 15 artists who had number one hits that
year failed to appear on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. This showed the magazine had clearly chosen a niche for itself — i.e. rock and roll music — and followed its top stars closely. The Beatles, for example, appeared in four cover photographs, while other popular musicians of the time, such as Bobby Goldsboro (“Honey”), Herb Alpert (“This Guy’s in Love With You”), The Rascals (“People Got to Be Free”), and Diana Ross (“Love Child”), did not appear on any. However, *Rolling Stone* has slowly increased its coverage of number one artists throughout its history. Only three of the year’s number one artists appeared on the magazine’s cover in 1968. By 1973, this number had grown to include nine out of the 27 number one artists. In 1983 and 1988, half the number one artists appeared on the cover in some form.

An examination of cover lines in this same study revealed that in 1993, the cover pages began to list many more artists. Likely *Rolling Stone* editors adopted this practice in an effort to lure more readers and increase newsstand sales. Some of these covers included lists of as many as 23 artists, both musicians and actors alike. Often these artists were lesser-known musicians or musicians appealing to fans of independent music or “college rock.” This trend continued to be evident in 1998, when 49 groups that did not reach the Hot 100 charts appeared in the coverlines. While these two years, 1993 and 1998, showed an increasing amount of attention devoted to non-charting and “college rock” artists, the artists actually pictured on the covers still hit the Hot 100 charts.

According to his own testimony, Wenner never harbored ideals of working outside the confines of the music industry — after all, he said in a 1969 interview, “Capitalism is what allows us the incredible indulgence of this music” (“*Rolling Stone*”s
Rock World,” p. 78). From the magazine’s beginnings as a newsprint tabloid, he was fully aware of the market he was targeting and of his goals as an editor (Anson, 1981).

The cover serves as a convenient method of analysis for this study, as it is considered an important representation of a magazine’s philosophy. One might say, “So goes the cover, goes the magazine.” Though few studies of magazine covers exist before the 1980s, a tradition of studying magazine covers to determine not only significant information about the publication but also the publication’s relationship with popular culture has since developed. A 1988 study of *Time* magazine covers justified its use of the covers by citing this quote: Covers “are very important. They set a mood, a tone, that demonstrates what *Time* considers to be important” (McManus, 1976, p. 195). A 1985 *Journalism Quarterly* study used the cover as its unit of analysis and examined the individuals named man or woman of the year by *Time*:

The people on *Time* magazine’s Man-of-the-Year covers represent who the editors think had the greatest influence during the preceding year. Analyzing the covers is useful for at least two reasons. First, the covers provide benchmarks to history. Second, the covers give a sense, generically, of who wields power and influence (Christ & Johnson, p. 893).

Media studies often explore the visual representation of gender on magazine covers and single out criteria analyzed for each cover subject. For example, the 1988 study of *Time* coded women’s nationality, citizenship, age, and occupation (Christ & Johnson). Others have focused on political imagery represented on the cover (Moriarty & Popovich, 1991). A study similar to this study of *Rolling Stone* sought to examine *TV*
Guide’s response to changes in television and found the magazine covered mainstream television networks while ignoring growing interest in programming on public television and cable networks (Dye & Harmon, 1987). The magazine did not keep pace with changing viewer interests, the study concluded. Covers and cover stories were analyzed and assigned one of 11 categories to describe the type of programming featured on the cover. The importance of imagery in crafting culture is examined in The Girl on the Magazine Cover, which analyzed 13 magazines’ covers from 1895 to 1930. The girl on the cover is described as the “first mass media stereotype,” and mass media, the book posits, “exist not only to make money but also to make meaning” (Kitch, p. 191). “The (Nearly) Naked Truth,” examines messages regarding race and gender conveyed by photographs in the first year of Life magazine. It sees documentary photography “not as a reflection of reality but as a culturally constructed historical artifact reflecting power relations and social conflict” (Flamiano, 2002, p. 122). Images that Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media looks at visual stereotypical coverage in a broad range of categories, including gender and race (Lester, 1996).

Today, some argue that its attention to the popularity of some artists made Rolling Stone the first magazine to truly grasp the importance of popular culture: Rolling Stone helped forge a new social (and non-political) consensus in the ’70s and ’80s, pulling the edges of Hollywood and TV into the mainstream, harnessing the binding curve of music to establish the iconic language of the times (Weir, 1998, ¶ 6).
It was also, by extension, the first to understand that image is everything, and in a world of image, the cover becomes the most important thing: the image, the brand, of the magazine. “The reason nobody, not even Cobain, turned down the *Rolling Stone* cover was that it was a hallmark of your acceptance in the only country that matters to Americans” (Hepworth, 2006, p. 8).

A photograph on the cover of *Rolling Stone* therefore conveys two meanings: 1) the “hallmark of acceptance,” or, that a person has reached a certain stature within popular culture; and 2) that the editors and writers of *Rolling Stone* are on target and in tune with their assessments of what individuals have reached this stature. To assess what influence the Hot 100 Billboard chart might have on selection of cover subjects, this study asked:

R1: How closely does *Rolling Stone’s* cover mimic the Hot 100 Billboard charts, as evidenced by its selection of cover subjects and coverlines?

Published weekly, the Hot 100 Billboard charts reveal what music is popular at any given time. This study examined, based on strength of popularity on the Hot 100 Billboard chart, what artists are more likely to appear on *Rolling Stone*’s iconic front cover. This study also examined how frequently top charting artists appear in the coverlines.

R2: Based on race, gender and occupation, who is most likely to appear on the cover photograph?

Rock and roll being a diverse genre of music, this study examined the diversity of *Rolling Stone* cover artists by focusing on the cover photograph.
R3: How has the relationship between the cover subjects and their popularity on the Hot 100 Billboard charts, as well as the diversity of the cover in terms of race and gender, evolved over time?

Throughout the repositioning and redesign of the magazine, Wenner has offered clear explanations for changes made to maintain a fresh attitude and outlook; yet, many complain the magazine has been formulaic from the start. An examination of the diversity of cover images through time and artists’ relationship with the charts showed what repositioning has taken place. Specifically, an analysis of hits charted by cover subjects offered evidence to support or disprove arguments that the magazine has “sold out.”
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

For this study, a content analysis of *Rolling Stone* magazine covers was conducted covering the years 1968 to 2007. This time frame was divided into five-year periods. Two randomly selected issues for each month of the year (two January issues, two February issue, two March issues, etc.) were selected from a pool of all issues in each five-year period. This resulted in eight constructed years of 24 issues each (Lacy, Riffe & Randle, 1998). This study expanded on the earlier study, completed in 2002, that examined six years of *Rolling Stone* covers, the first of which was chosen randomly. This resulted in an examination of the years 1968, 1973, 1978, 1988, 1993, and 1998. The preferred method of constructing entire years used in this study provided a more accurate picture of changes at *Rolling Stone*.

This study analyzed occupation, race, and gender for each subject pictured in the cover photograph, and it documented how many of the artists who were featured on the cover and coverlines also appeared in the Hot 100 Billboard charts of the same year. Using these weekly charts, the highest hit for each artist was noted. The Hot 100 Billboard chart was selected for this study because it tracks the top 100 singles each week based on both radio airplay and store sales. The only other comprehensive Billboard chart available, the Billboard 200, charts only weekly album sales and ignores airplay, an important component of the music industry, at least in its earlier years. Also, the Hot 100 Billboard chart was chosen because it includes music from all genres. Billboard charts top country music, Latin music, dance music, and other genres of music, but this study
required a focus on the most popular music of the period within the largest market available.

To compile this information, the book *Rolling Stone 1,000 Covers: A History of the Most Influential Magazine in Pop Culture* was used (Wenner, 2006). Covers not included in the book were examined via microfilm and current issues. The most current version of *Joel Whitburn's Top Pop Singles* was consulted, as well as Whitburn’s online database of Billboard charts (Whitburn, 2002). In his book, Whitburn compiled each artist’s hits since 1955 and notes how high each hit rose on the Hot 100 charts. These charts revealed how many hit singles each artist had in a particular year and whether or not the artist’s singles reached a top 10 position on the charts. Because some artists featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone*’s January issues first appeared on the Hot 100 charts in the preceding year, this study also noted singles that hit their peak in a year prior to those studied — but only if they remained on the charts during the year in question.

Charts were not used directly; Whitburn’s book provides chart performance organized by performer, which proved the most efficient method of gathering the information needed for this study. Charts were consulted only in the final years in this study (2003–2007), which were not included in the latest version of Whitburn’s book. In this case, weekly charts for the entire year were reviewed, and all instances of a performer’s hits were recorded until the highest charting hit for each was identified.

The coding instrument allowed identification of all proper names mentioned on the cover (for both bands and individuals), the names of the cover photograph subjects, and the artistic status of all those mentioned by name: musician with no hit in a particular
year, musician with a hit, and non-musician. It tracked race: white, black, Hispanic, Asian, First Peoples, and multiple races (for groups); and it tracked gender. For the purposes of this study, a band was considered one entity and was not counted as more than one individual. The category of “Illustration/Cartoon” was created to encompass such things as the famous Hunter S. Thompson illustrations, inanimate objects (including a cover featuring Batman’s suit), and collages of multiple individual photographs (which were possible to code for race and gender). Though some of the coverlines on *Rolling Stone* were written cryptically or in reference to very specific people and places, every attempt was made to decipher whether coverlines refer to an artist or other subject.

The data were collected to determine whether or not *Rolling Stone* editors prefer to place top-charting artists on the magazine’s cover. To do this, this study compared the number of top-charting artists to the number of artists with no hits. The second relationship that was examined was the change in the number of top-charting artists on the cover over time.

The author and two graduate students studying communications at a state university tested this coding system. Intercoder reliability for this study, based on percentage of agreement, ranged from a low 90 percent for the categories determining the race and occupation of the cover subject; 91.2 percent for the category determining the highest hit of each artist the year he or she was mentioned on a coverline; to 92.3 percent for the category determining what individuals or groups were mentioned in coverlines; to 93.4 percent for the category determining the occupation of an individual or group mentioned in a coverline; to 94.2 percent for the category determining the highest hit of
each artist the year he or she was pictured on the cover; to 95 percent for the category determining the gender of the cover subject; to 99.3 percent for the category determining who was pictured on each cover. Overall, intercoder reliability based on percentage of agreement for the study was 93.2 percent.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study included 191 issues, encompassing an era spanning from the first issue of *Rolling Stone* published Nov. 1, 1967, to May 30, 2007. It did not include any of the end-of-the-year issues that featured a compilation of the year’s covers reproduced on the cover. For this reason, during one five-year period examined, only one December issue existed for examination that did not publish one of these composite covers. A total of 210 cover subjects were examined; the majority of covers featured one cover subject alone. Illustrations or photographic collages accounted for 9 percent of covers examined.

Few artists appeared in multiple cover photographs throughout the years examined. However, it is no surprise that the musicians most often pictured on the cover — even today — belong to the era that gave *Rolling Stone* its start: They were the Rolling Stones and The Beatles, who appeared on 8 and 10 covers, respectively. (To put this into perspective, this means The Beatles appeared on 5 percent of all covers examined.)

It is also no surprise to note that musicians dominated the covers. Musicians accounted for the largest percentage (64 percent) of cover subjects. Actors (20 percent) accounted for the next largest group (see table 1). Since the first issue, the percentage of cover subjects per decade who were musicians fluctuated from 60 to 67 percent, a fairly constant number (see table 2). Actors, politicians and other artists and occupations accounted for the rest. Cartoons (including the famous Hunter S. Thompson illustrations) accounted for a small number as well. The 1980s was the decade that saw greater
coverage of actors, with 32 percent of cover subjects being identified as such. That number was 12 percent in the 1970s, and in the 2000s, remained almost the same. The number of musicians and actors dropped in the 2000s, while the category of “Other,” including politicians, non-musical artists, other occupations, and illustrations/cartoons rose to 30 percent. Illustrations and cartoons accounted for 17 percent of the cover subjects in this decade — almost triple the percentage of illustrations and cartoons in the 1970s. This category was coded individually, but collapsed into the “Other” for table 2 because the data within individual cells would have been too small.

### Table 1

*Occupation of Rolling Stone Cover Subjects, 1967 to 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-musical artist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other occupation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration/cartoon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total N</strong></td>
<td>210</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Occupation of Rolling Stone Cover Subjects, by Decade, 1967 to 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Musician</th>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$f$ (%)</td>
<td>$f$ (%)</td>
<td>$f$ (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s/1970s</td>
<td>41 (67.2)</td>
<td>7 (11.5)</td>
<td>13 (21.2)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>32 (64.0)</td>
<td>16 (32.0)</td>
<td>2 (4.0)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>33 (63.5)</td>
<td>14 (26.9)</td>
<td>5 (9.6)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>28 (59.6)</td>
<td>5 (10.6)</td>
<td>14 (29.8)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>134 (63.8)</td>
<td>42 (20.0)</td>
<td>34 (16.2)</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 21.70, 9 df, $p \leq .0014$

Even with a variety of cover subjects outside the music industry or top charts, it was still apparent that *Rolling Stone* devoted the most attention to artists with current musical hits. This study compared only the charts for the year subjects appeared on the cover of the magazine, and the relationship was noticeably strong. The percentage of Hot 100 artists portrayed on the cover ranged from 68 to 91 percent of all musicians pictured on the cover per decade (table 3). Covers published during the current era, the 2000s, exhibited the most risk-taking, limiting coverage of Hot 100 artists to 68 percent of all cover musicians. By comparison, the original decade of *Rolling Stone* (the late 1960s through the 1970s) saw a reliance on Hot 100 musicians for 88 percent of all musician
cover subjects. A change seems to have occurred sometime before the 1990s, when the number of musicians on the cover with number one hits dropped significantly, and the number of musicians with Top 2–100 hits increased. In fact, during the 1990s, a musician was more likely to appear on the cover with a Top 2–100 hit than a number one hit, and this was the only decade in which this relationship was reversed. The relationship with the placement on the charts is made more apparent when segmenting the charts further. Although coded in three categories (number one hit, top 10 hit, and top 11–100 hit), the categories were collapsed in table 3 because the data in the individual cells were too

Table 3

*Musicians with Top Hits Pictured on the Rolling Stone Cover, by Decade, 1967 to 2007*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>No hits</th>
<th>No. 1 hits</th>
<th>Top 2–100</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s/1970s</td>
<td>5 (12.2)</td>
<td>23 (56.1)</td>
<td>13 (31.7)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>3 (9.4)</td>
<td>23 (71.9)</td>
<td>8 (18.8)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>6 (18.2)</td>
<td>11 (33.3)</td>
<td>16 (48.6)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>9 (32.1)</td>
<td>12 (42.9)</td>
<td>7 (25.0)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (17.2)</td>
<td>69 (51.5)</td>
<td>44 (31.4)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 14.13, 6 df, p ≤ .03
small. Of the covers depicting musicians, the majority focused on artists who had top 10 hits (52 percent) in the same year depicted. The next largest percentage of the musician covers (24 percent) was devoted to artists with hits charting 11–100 in the same year depicted. Musicians with no hits in the same year accounted for 17 percent of the musician cover subjects (and 12 percent of cover subjects overall).

Of all cover subjects — including actors, politicians and others — during the 1970s, 60 percent were artists with a musical hit, and 39 percent had number one hits during the same year (see table 4). The current decade, the 2000s, has so far proven to be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>No hits</th>
<th>No.1 hits</th>
<th>Top 2–100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s/1970s</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>24 (39.3)</td>
<td>24 (39.3)</td>
<td>13 (21.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21 (42.0)</td>
<td>23 (46.0)</td>
<td>6 (12.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25 (48.1)</td>
<td>11 (21.2)</td>
<td>16 (30.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28 (59.6)</td>
<td>12 (25.5)</td>
<td>7 (14.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

210 98 (46.7) 70 (33.3) 42 (20)

Chi square = 14.16, 6 df, p ≤ .0280
more diverse in these terms. Only 40 percent of cover subjects had hits on the Hot 100 Billboard charts the same year they appeared on the cover; nearly 60 percent did not have hits at all. This all but reversed the trend in the original years of the magazine, when only 39 percent of cover subjects fell outside of the musical charts. (It must be noted, however, that covers with collages of artists were included in the totals for non-charting artists. In the current decade, the number of such collages increased, which can be observed by the 17 percent illustration and cartoon covers in this era.) In the 1980s, the percentage of cover subjects with number one hits climbed to 46 percent. (It fell to 21 percent during the 1990s, the lowest such total in the study.) In fact, a musician’s chances of appearing on the cover without a number one hit were increased during the 1990s and 2000s. The reliance on top hit-makers in the 1980s was obvious as well when examining the data for top 10 artists. The percentage of cover subjects with top 10 hits climbed to 54 percent in the 1980s, the highest such number, but this category was collapsed with Top 2–100 because the data were too small.

The numbers suggested Rolling Stone is primarily a music magazine, but can make exceptions for covers depicting other culturally significant individuals — if they are white men. Women accounted for 19 percent of all cover subjects (table 5), although they shared the spotlight with men on another 8 percent. (Beginning with the discussion of this table, the term “cover subject” refers to the human individuals or groups pictured on the covers. Until now, the 210 cover subjects analyzed have included illustrations, cartoons, and other inanimate objects.) It goes without saying then, that men dominated the covers: 73 percent of all cover subjects were men, and men appeared with women in
an additional 8 percent of the covers examined. Some of the categories coded in this table produced zeroes or numbers below five; therefore, low expected frequencies made use of chi square analysis inappropriate.

However, the greatest dichotomy existed in the breakdown of race. White subjects accounted for 79 percent of all cover subjects. All minorities as cover subjects combined accounted for 16 percent. Covers on which minorities appeared with white

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender and Race of Rolling Stone Cover Subjects, 1967–2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple races</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One cover subject’s race was indiscernible and therefore not included.
subjects represented 5 percent of cover subjects. (So, for Latinos and Asians, the greatest chance of appearing on the cover was to appear alongside white subjects. Latinos represented 3 percent of cover subjects; Asians — or more accurately, Yoko Ono — accounted for only 2 percent of cover subjects examined.) Female minorities had the least chance of appearing on the cover. Only 6 percent of the cover subjects were devoted to female minorities individually (and not as members of a mixed-race musical group or cast). Domination of covers belonged to white men, represented in at least 61 percent of all cover subjects.

If the *Rolling Stone* cover validates the cultural importance of its subjects, then white men and women also had an easier time of receiving this validation without an accompanying top musical hit. Nearly 40 percent of the white male cover subjects were individuals with no musical hits; in other words, these were men whose validation of significance did not depend on the musical charts. They were culturally significant for other reasons, even if they were musicians. These numbers included both musicians with no hits in the year they appeared on the cover and men in other occupations (see table 6). Although low expected frequencies made use of a chi square analysis inappropriate for table 6, it showed the following: Fully 52 percent of white women depicted on the cover had no musical hits; this was the highest such percentage. It was inflated due to the number of white female actors portrayed on the cover. (A total 36 percent of covers devoted to white women depicted actors. By comparison, only 20 percent of covers devoted to white men depicted actors.) But these numbers changed when examining other minority groups. All covers devoted to Latino men (four) depicted musicians with
charting hits. Similarly, covers devoted to Latino women always depicted musicians with a top 10 hit. Where were the Latino actors, politicians and artists? Richard “Cheech” Marin, a Mexican-American comedian who shared a cover with comedy partner Tommy

Table 6
Rolling Stone Individual Cover Subjects with Top Hits, by Race and Gender, 1967 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>No hits</th>
<th>No. 1 hit</th>
<th>Top 2-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13 (52.0)</td>
<td>6 (24.0)</td>
<td>6 (24.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>47 (39.8)</td>
<td>44 (37.3)</td>
<td>27 (22.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (white)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 (33.3)</td>
<td>3 (50.0)</td>
<td>1 (16.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7 (41.2)</td>
<td>6 (35.3)</td>
<td>4 (23.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (black)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (60.0)</td>
<td>2 (40.0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (25.0)</td>
<td>3 (75.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (other)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Chong” and basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabar, was the sole representative in this study of Latinos in all industries other than music. Half of the covers devoted to black women were devoted to musicians with a number one hit. (By comparison, 24 percent of covers devoted to white women portrayed number one musicians.) A black female actor (Whoopi Goldberg) was spotlighted in only one cover. The only Asian portrayed on the covers sampled was Yoko Ono, a musician, yes, but also the wife of a white musician (John Lennon) of great cultural importance, according to *Rolling Stone* (he appeared in seven of the 10 Beatles covers examined in this study) and the charts (22 number one hits throughout his career).

Though the covers consistently skewed toward depicting white men, the diversity of covers changed throughout the decades. The percentage of women depicted grew since

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Both sexes depicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s–1980s</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>15 (14.2)</td>
<td>85 (80.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s–2000s</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>22 (24.4)</td>
<td>58 (64.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>196</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi square</td>
<td>6.16, 2 df, p ≤ .05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the magazine’s first decades, when only 20 percent of the cover subjects were individual women or groups including women (table 7). Both of these percentages climbed, and in the 1990s and 2000s, women were represented in 36 percent of cover subjects. The numbers were even higher in the 2000s. Women were represented in 42 percent of cover subjects. Some 28 percent of cover subjects were solely women. (By comparison, 58 percent were solely men.) Decades were coded separately, but collapsed into two categories in table 7.

Similarly, *Rolling Stone* has diversified in terms of race in the current decade (see table 8). A surprising 43 percent of cover subjects included or were devoted solely to ethnic minorities in the 2000s. In its first full decade, the 1970s, the same could be said

Table 8

*Rolling Stone* Cover Subjects by Race and Decade, 1967 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>White $f$</th>
<th>White (%)</th>
<th>Minorities $f$</th>
<th>Minorities (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960s/1970s</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>47 (81.0)</td>
<td>8 (18.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41 (85.4)</td>
<td>7 (14.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40 (85.1)</td>
<td>7 (14.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25 (59.5)</td>
<td>18 (42.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total N</strong></td>
<td><strong>195</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 15.04, 3 df, $p \leq .0018$
for only 19 percent of cover subjects. This number did not improve in following years; in
the 1980s and 1990s, only 15 percent of cover subjects included minorities. In the 1990s,
whites were dominant among the cover subjects (85 percent). In the current decade, 23
percent of cover subjects were black, an over-representation compared to the percentage
of blacks among the U.S. population (12.4) according to the U.S. Census (“American
Community Survey Data,” 2006). However, all other races were under-represented.
Races were analyzed separately, but collapsed into one category.

What did the coverlines reveal? Again, the covers of Rolling Stone showed not
only a devotion to Hot 100 artists, but also revealed that a consistent formula seems to be
in use from year to year, even across the decades of changes at Rolling Stone. In the
1970s, 33 percent of the issues examined included at least one coverline about an artist
with a number one hit. This percentage varied little in the 1980s and 1990s, and today, in
the current decade, 26 percent of the issues examined included coverlines about artists
with number one hits. Expand this analysis to include artists with top 10 or any Hot 100
hits, and the consistent interest in the charts was clear: In each decade, more than half of
all issues examined included coverlines about artists in the top 10 of the charts during the
year of publication. The majority of the issues (ranging from 64 to 83 percent per decade)
had at least one coverline about charting artists (see table 9). Another way of looking at
this was to note that, for example, of the 52 issues examined from the 1990s in this study,
only nine failed to include some sort of Hot 100 artist in the coverlines. These issues
were not necessarily devoted to non-charting artists; rather, these were the issues with
coverlines devoted to individuals such as comedian Martin Lawrence or the cast of “Seinfeld” (depicted twice on covers studied with no other coverlines beyond their own names) and who are not musicians. In the 1990s, the number of covers with more than five coverlines about charting artists increased to 21 percent, while in the 2000s, the number of covers with no coverlines about charting artists was at its highest at 36 percent.

Table 9

Rolling Stone Issues with Coverlines about Charting Artists, by Decades, 1967 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No coverlines about charting artists</th>
<th>One coverline about charting artists</th>
<th>Two to four coverlines about charting artists</th>
<th>Five or more coverlines about charting artists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
<td>f (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s/1970s</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>12 (19.7)</td>
<td>26 (42.6)</td>
<td>21 (34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12 (24.0)</td>
<td>10 (20.0)</td>
<td>24 (48.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9 (17.3)</td>
<td>7 (13.5)</td>
<td>25 (48.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17 (36.2)</td>
<td>5 (10.6)</td>
<td>20 (42.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>50 (23.8)</td>
<td>48 (22.9)</td>
<td>90 (42.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 40.66, 15 df, p ≤ .0004
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine whether or not *Rolling Stone* has followed the lead of the Hot 100 charts and the music industry throughout its history. It found not only that the magazine has an affinity for portraying top-charting artists on its cover, but that it also “plays it safe” in other respects. Music has been widely considered a diverse arena of American life, and musical genres such as jazz and rock and roll — which are dominated by and were originated by black artists — are heralded as truly “American” inventions. Yet, the images of *Rolling Stone*, the premiere musical magazine, seem oblivious to this fact. Its covers belong to the white male musicians who rocked the charts yesterday and today.

To say that a look at just one random Hot 100 chart shows a little more diversity is an understatement. A quick look at a recent chart from June 2, 2007, shows some 60 black artists and groups performing on 100 hits, or 45 percent of all artists and groups. (Figures do not total 100, as multiple artists and groups contributed to many of the tracks.) Another 6 percent are Hispanic, while 2 percent are musical groups with members of multiple races and ethnicities. Women perform on 29 percent of the hit tracks.

Should this be so surprising? Although *Rolling Stone* has long prided itself on its political coverage, it has also received criticism for its failure to realize the political implications of race. Draper set forth the idea that in some ways, *Rolling Stone* was not so radical when he described the magazine’s lack of interest in black music as “infamous”
(1990, p. 20) and its coverage of black issues as “paternalistic” (p. 125). Here we are 40 years later, and possibly, given the results of this study, the same case could be made about *Rolling Stone*’s cover. Can a cover be political? Can the decision to place more women and minorities on a cover be considered a political move? Does the so-called “radical” cover, with its edgy graphics, poses and imagery, promote truly countercultural ideas? Did *Rolling Stone* fail to live up to its expectations? Suddenly the revolution looks to be a lot more fun if you’re white and male.

Overall, the results of the study were mixed in terms of what they revealed about the magazine’s cover changes through time. On the one hand, there was a consistent interest in portraying cover subjects who were musicians. Most of the musicians pictured each year had at least one Hot 100 hit the same year. More than half of all issues in each decade also included coverlines about artists in the top 10 of the charts during the year of publication. These data, combined with results from the earlier study conducted by this author that revealed that in 1968 the number of top 10 artists on the cover was at its peak, indicated that from the beginning *Rolling Stone*’s editors and writers have been greatly interested in covering what’s popular on the Hot 100 Billboard charts. For this reason, this study questions the claim that embracing the charts has been in some way the cause of *Rolling Stone*’s “selling out” — especially in the most recent years of its history. In both this study and the author’s earlier study, data showed that interest in the Hot 100 artists was higher in the first decade of the magazine’s history than in the current decade. The number of artists with number one hits on the cover, which peaked in the 1980s, has dropped throughout the years, and the number of musicians with no hits the same year as
their cover appearance has grown. One of the insinuations of those who continue to state *Rolling Stone* has sold out is to claim the magazine has suddenly developed an interest in the charts. For example, in 2004, *The Observer* had this to say:

> It is enough to make the hardened rock music connoisseur recoil in disgust.
>
> But *Rolling Stone*, once the bible of American counterculture, this month completes its final embrace of populism. The three-decade-old mag is about to release a special Justin Timberlake cover (Islam, p. 3).

However, it is not enough to say the problem these critics have with *Rolling Stone* is a sudden embrace of the charts; the changes at the magazine have been more subtle than that.

Reviewing the data, some interesting trends emerge that show exactly how *Rolling Stone*’s cover has changed. First, in the 1980s, more actors appeared on the covers than during any other decade examined. In fact, when looking at the changes in terms of occupations of cover subjects, the 1980s and 1990s look similar, while the 2000s reflect a return to the values of the 1970s. Cover subjects of the 1970s included politicians, artists, and a surprising 10 percent of other occupations. During the 1980s and 1990s, no cover subjects fell in these categories. Now, the 2000s showed a return to an interest in politicians (4 percent of all cover subjects) and other occupations (9 percent). In the 1980s and 1990s, actors claimed more than 25 percent of cover subjects. Again, a drop to 10 percent in the 2000s shows a return to the values of the 1970s.

The number of musicians on the cover with top hits has fluctuated through the decades as well. Again, the 2000s showed a closer similarity with the 1970s than any
other decade. In the 1980s, 72 percent of all musicians on the cover had a number one hit the same year — the highest such number. In the 1990s, 42 percent of the musicians on the cover had Top 11–100 hits — marking the only decade in which this category was greater than musicians with number one hits on the cover. However, this fluctuating interest in non-charting artists does not necessarily indicate an interest in obscure, new musicians. Throughout the decades, *Rolling Stone* has continued its coverage of the artists who topped the 1960s and 1970s charts, including The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Santana, and others. A glance at the cover subjects for the 2000s shows seven such artists, including two covers for The Beatles. That means a significant 25 percent of all musicians on the covers first had hits in the early decades of the magazine’s coverage.

And in the 2000s, the numbers of women and minorities on the cover was greater than it has ever been. Black subjects in the 2000s represented 23 percent of all cover subjects while women represented 28 percent.

What does this all mean? It is not necessarily a surprise that the magazine focused on male cover subjects, especially during its earliest decades. In 1974, 77 percent of its readers were men (Janssen, 1974), and today, its readership is 61 percent male (“Reader Profile,” 2007), figures that seem to mimic the percentages of male cover subjects during these same eras. During the 1960–1980s, some 80 percent of the cover subjects were men; during the 1990–2000s, some 64 percent were. Today, as he chases and tracks the success of *Maxim* and *FHM*, Wenner is making explicitly known whom he still considers to be the closest competitors for *Rolling Stone*: men’s magazines.
Also, it is not a surprise that the magazine changed in the 1980s. This era coincides with significant changes in the structure of Rolling Stone: the magazine moved its headquarters to New York from San Francisco, and in 1984 launched a crucial advertising campaign that argued its readers were “yuppies” rather than “yippies.” That coverage of actors and also top charting artists would increase on the cover suggests the magazine also was attempting to reflect the new interests of its changing targeted audience. As an editorial in the New Scientist noted, a magazine’s evolution “is strictly biological too, adaptation to a changing world being the key to survival or extinction” (Van Zuilen, 1977, p. 272).

Changes have continued during the 1990s and 2000s in new and varied ways. It is possible that Rolling Stone is attempting to change with the times in ways that will not hurt its original focus, or bottom line. Rolling Stone is far from a rapid decline. It celebrated its 1,000th issue in 2006, and today, sales of advertisements for Wenner Media’s Rolling Stone, US Weekly, and Men’s Journal — the company’s three magazines — were up to $674 million in 2006 (Lieberman, 2007). Total gross revenue for Rolling Stone was up 6.9 percent to $248.1 million in 2005 over 2004 (Morrison, 2006). The year of Ed Needham, glad mag editor extraordinaire — for it was exactly that, a year — did little damage to the magazine’s circulation or reputation. As of June 2007, the circulation was up to 1.4 million, and at the end of 2006, circulation was up 10.6 percent over the 2005 circulation (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2007). That was the second year in a row with gains, as circulation in 2005 climbed 3.3 percent to 1.3 million. This trumps the circulation of other magazines that cover music, such as Blender and Spin, which have
recently struggled with dropping circulation (Flamm, 2007). It continues to win National Magazine Awards; in May of 2007 it won a General Excellence award for its circulation class of 1 to 2 million (Ives, 2007).

This is a magazine that has found a way — to paraphrase one of its critics, quoted earlier in this study — to reinvent itself while staying true to its original mission. Its mission is rock and roll, the kind that has the music industry’s seal of approval via the musical charts, and its reinvention is to cover whatever music happens to be at the top of the charts. (In other words, Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake are welcome here, no matter how they may offend those who believe rock and roll belongs to The Beatles of yesterday and their successors today). Interestingly, Wenner continues to portray himself as a man ahead of the times:

“I got flack after issue five for putting color in the logo. I got flack when it became four color, and I got flack when I put a fucking staple in the magazine,” recalls a mildly amused Wenner, the pop-culture bible's editor in chief. “People are change adverse. If you ask them, they want to leave it comfortably the way it is. But some of us, like myself, like change” (Granatstein, 2002, p. SR6).

This study, however, rebuts his claims to a certain extent. *Rolling Stone*, as defined by its covers, is not exactly a magazine of counterculture; it is a magazine of top-selling musicians. It is not necessarily a magazine of change; but a magazine that changes when the top charts do — and even then, when it comes to race and gender, somewhat reluctantly. *Rolling Stone*’s most radical act was that of creating itself to cover a music world others had little interest in examining in a serious manner. But this world did not
last as a counterculture indefinitely; it was embraced by the mainstream and today remains firmly planted within it.

In 1968, *Rolling Stone*’s writers wrote about the most popular music of the time: The Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Jimi Hendrix. Occasionally, its music critics spotted a worthy new act, wrote about it, and helped a musician embark on a successful career. In 2006, the magazine’s writers shared the same responsibilities. They wrote about and highlighted the most popular musicians of the time: Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera, and Kanye West, most recently pictured on the cover on Sept. 21, 2006, Aug. 24, 2006, and Feb. 9, 2006, respectively. At the same time, the critics kept a pulse on underground music, including the names of lesser-known acts on the covers, and presumably, the magazine’s pages. To keep its focus on top 10 artists, the magazine has expanded its coverage to include not only rock and roll, but also rap, hip hop, electronica, and dance music, among other genres. The focus of the cover is on tried-and-true musicians who sell not only songs, but also issues. But these musicians have slowly begun to reflect the diversity of the charts, as *Rolling Stone* reaches out to readers beyond its original audience, whether they are Mercedes-driving yuppies or fans of the genre-defying musician Tracy Chapman.

The fact that the magazine has slowly embraced new genres and diversified its covers shows it is capable of change of focus. More interesting is the quick action Wenner took when he fired Needham. This was an example of repositioning the magazine quickly — both when he brought him in to respond to the popularity of “lad mags” and when he fired him when his performance in some way disappointed. This is a
It can be argued that the magazine has reached a circulation of more than 1 million readers due to its consistency and savvy use of the cover photographs and coverlines. Throughout the years, the numbers show a loyalty to Hot 100 Billboard artists. *Rolling Stone* chooses mainstream artists for its cover photographs, and these mainstream artists attract readers to the issues. Then, to showcase their writers’ diverse knowledge, editors list lesser-known acts on the cover as well. These lesser-known acts not only lure more readers (who would not pick up a magazine based on a mainstream artist on the cover) but also serve as proof that the magazine has not sold out.
Of course, more research is needed to support the relationships discussed in this conclusion. This study was limited by the small numbers within certain populations such as minorities on the cover. There were too few cases to fill in the cells of several tables. If this study were to be repeated, this limitation should be addressed. Larger sampling may be needed to arrive at large enough numbers for analysis in key categories.

In future research, one important question must be asked: do the charts show less or more diversity of race and gender during the years of *Rolling Stone*’s publication? If *Rolling Stone* is taking its lead for cover and coverline subjects from the charts, how is the lack of diversity in gender and race explained throughout different eras? Is this another instance of the magazine following the lead or failing to follow?

It would be worthwhile to study the magazine’s editorial content, and in so doing, ask: do the magazine’s pages reflect the same mix found on the cover? An analysis of the magazine’s content should show whether or not the articles reflect a healthy mix of coverage about popular and lesser-known groups, and how this mix has changed throughout the years. Also, the magazine, because it had a specific niche market in its first years, ignored most of the top artists of the time. Now the magazine seems to devote some attention to all top artists, no matter their clout or artistic integrity. An examination of the magazine’s inside pages might reveal that top-charting artists who never appear on the cover do appear within the magazine’s pages. When journalists call the magazine a “sell out,” they may be referring to this change, without articulating it in this way.

*Rolling Stone* has long prided itself for discovering music and predicting what will sell rather than focusing on coverage of what has sold. “It’s our track record of
knowing what we’re talking about, of being on to good groups,” Wenner told Newsweek in 1969 (“Rocking the News”). Wenner would like us to believe that the fact that Rolling Stone writes about top artists is just a coincidence; their powers of prediction are that sharp. Any additional study of cover photographs should delve into this phenomenon, examining the timing of the photographs as compared with the artists’ debut on the Hot 100 Billboard charts.
REFERENCES


Rocking the news. (1969, April 28). *Newsweek*, 73, 90.


http://www.census.gov/


Appendix A:

Coder Instructions

This content analysis compares the artists featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine with those who appear on the Hot 100 Billboard charts. To code, you will analyze the following features of the *Rolling Stone* magazine cover:

**Issue Date:**

You will need to determine the date of each issue and write it in the appropriate blank in the format of YYYY/MM/DD.

**Cover Photo:**

First, you should determine who the cover artist or artists are. This can be determined by analyzing both the cover page and table of contents page for each issue. Each table of contents has a cover credit that identifies the individual in the picture. Each person’s name will be written in the blank provided. Covers can have multiple cover subjects, but a musical group will count as one cover subject. The cast of a television show or movie will count as one individual as well — unless one person is a musician and therefore counted as a separate cover subject. Covers of multiple photographs arranged artistically on the page will be labeled “collage” in the cover subject blank, though the gender and race/ethnicity of the photo subjects should be noted appropriately.

Example 1:

Cover subject’s name: Julia Roberts

Example 2:
Cover subject one: Cast of “American Idol”

Cover subject two: Paula Abdul

**Occupation:**

Please determine, using information on the cover photo and table of contents, the occupation of the person or persons pictured on the cover. If the cover subject has a musical hit within the same year appearing on the cover, the subject should be identified as a musician, even if the subject has another profession as well. Please code any covers focusing solely on inanimate objects (such as an American flag), cartoon characters or collages of multiple individual photographs as “Illustrations/Cartoons.”

**Gender and race:**

You will need to determine the race and gender of each cover subject. For a band, please select “multiple races” and “both male and female” depicted, if this is applicable. Please determine race to the best of your abilities, choosing indiscernible when you are not certain of gender or race. Inanimate objects and cartoon characters should not be coded for gender and race. Collages of multiple photos should be coded in terms of gender and race, if applicable. For example, a cover with a photo collage including Madonna and U2’s Bono would be coded as “Both sexes depicted” and “White.”

**Coverlines:**

Skip the questions that relate to the person’s status as a musician and code the coverlines next. You will need to fill a blank for every person or musical group who is mentioned by proper name in a coverline. Coverline is defined as any text that promotes the image on the cover or the content of the magazine. (A full story that begins on the
cover is not counted as a cover line.) This includes individuals mentioned by first, last, or first and last name. This also includes the proper names of authors.

Example 3:

Headline: “The Beatles were better than Presley”

Name: The Beatles
Name: Presley

Example 4:

Headline: “Smith on Pres. Bush”

Name: Smith
Name: Bush

This also includes fictional characters in books, movies, and television shows, as long as they are human or played by humans.

Example 5:

Headline: “Fred Flinstone Rocks n’ Rolls”

Name: Fred Flinstone

This does not include groups of people who do not have a proper name.

Example 6:

Headline: “Hippies protest at D.C.”

If you have any problems determining who the person in the headline is, check the table of contents. Usually the article summaries will give you enough information to determine whether or not the headline refers to a person, band, or other subject.
Musicians and hits:

Once you have filled a blank for each individual, you should turn to the book Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002 for the rest of your work. You will be asked to determine whether each individual or band had a hit on the top music charts the same year that these Rolling Stone issues were published.

You will first identify whether or not each individual or group featured on the cover or listed in coverlines is a musician. To determine this, first search for the individual or band in Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002.

If the individual or the band cannot be found in Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002, this suggests the person is not a musician, and you should select “2” for non-musician and record “0” as the highest hit charted. To be certain, check the table of contents of the Rolling Stone issue you are coding and check for clues regarding the person’s status. If there is any information that suggests the person is a musician, select “1.” But if the person does not appear in Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002, this person did not chart.

If the individual or the band is found, look to the very left of the individual listing and check the song’s debut date. This will let you know whether or not the artist charted in the year you are coding. See the example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CUBA, Joe, Sextet</th>
<th>R&amp;B/BUB/LP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin-rock combo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/66</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Bang Bang…</td>
<td>F $5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7/67</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oh Yeah!</td>
<td>F $5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tico 475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tico 490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this example, The Joe Cuba Sextet had two hits that reached the charts on Oct. 22, 1966 and Jan. 7, 1967. This is listed in *Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002* as the “Debut Date.”

The two songs reached the peak positions of 63 and 62, which means neither was a top 10 hit. This is listed in *Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002* as the “Peak Pos.”

The songs were on the charts eight and five weeks. This is listed in *Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955-2002* as the “Wks Chr.”

Here’s where it gets tricky. For example, assume you are analyzing a cover from the year 1967. Did Joe Cuba have a top hit this year? Yes, “Oh Yeah!” But what about “Bang Bang”? It debuted on the charts at the end of October and stayed on the charts eight weeks. Did it cross into 1967? A quick check of a calendar reveals that no, eight weeks is not enough time to reach 1967. [Calendars were provided for coders.]

This means you must check the hits from the year directly before the year you are coding to see if any of them still remained in the charts the following year. So if we are coding 1967, the Joe Cuba Sextet had only one hit. Since the highest point on the chart (or “Peak Pos”) for this hit was 62, the Joe Cuba Sextet is not a top 10 artist. You will enter “062” as the highest point reached.

If Joe Cuba performed in more bands, *Joel Whitburn’s Top Pop Singles 1955–2002* would tell you so. For example, Paul McCartney has his own listing and also is
included in The Beatles’ listing. So if you look up Paul McCartney or other solo artists, make sure to search for the group’s hits that year too.

And so, by looking at the “Debut Date,” “Peak Pos,” and “Wks Chr” you should be able to determine whether the person had any hits in a particular year, and if so, how high they climbed the charts.
Appendix B:

Coding Sheet

1. Issue Date: ___ ___ ___ ___/___ ___ /___ ___/

Cover Photo

2. Cover subject’s name: ______________________________________________

3. What is the subject’s occupation? ___
   1 = Musician
   2 = Actor
   3 = Politician
   4 = Non-musical artist
   5 = Other occupation
   6 = Illustration/cartoon

4. What is the subject’s race? ___
   1 = White
   2 = Black
   3 = Hispanic
   4 = Asian
   5 = First Peoples
   6 = Indiscernible
   7 = Multiple races depicted

5. What is the subject’s gender? ___
   1 = Female
   2 = Male
   3 = Indiscernible
   4 = Men and women depicted

6. If musician, please indicate top Hot 100 chart position in this year: ___ ___ ___
   (If a non-musician, please enter 0.)

[The “Cover photo” section should be repeated as needed for covers with multiple subjects.]
Coverlines

7. Name: _____________________________________________________________

8. Is the subject a musician? ___
   
   For this question, and the similar ones that follow, use the following designation:
   1 = Yes
   2 = No

9. Top chart position: ____ ____ ____

10. Name: ____________________________________________________________

11. Is the subject a musician? ___

12. Top chart position: ____ ____ ____

13. Name: ____________________________________________________________

14. Is the subject a musician? ___

15. Top chart position: ____ ____ ____

16. Name: ____________________________________________________________

17. Is the subject a musician? ___

18. Top chart position: ____ ____ ____

[The “Coverlines” section could be repeated as needed to include all coverlines.]