

THE CURRENT

MAGAZINE DOCUMENTING THE CULTURE AS IT HAPPENS

ISSUE 007

THE TEA

WHO'S TRENDING

CURRENT SPORTS

BEHIND THE GAME

CURRENT BEAUTY

MODELS MAKING MOVES

STREET STORIES

WHAT THEY MISSED

BOSS MOVES /
HUSTLE TO BUSINESS

KERTIS 'AYEKO' OWENS

BUILT FOR
THE SCREEN

INSIDE ISSUE 007

The performers, builders and systems shaping the next screen

BUILT FOR THE SCREEN

AyeKO leads an issue about performance, ownership and cultural reach.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Visibility matters most when creators keep control

THE CURRENT POSITION

THE SCREEN IS NO LONGER FAR AWAY

Issue 007 follows the people turning access into durable creative position.

For years, independent creators were told that the screen lived somewhere else: behind a gate, inside a studio system or at the end of a move to another city. That distance is shrinking. Free streaming, direct audiences and regional film crews have created new routes from a local set to a national viewer. The opportunity is real, but access by itself is not ownership.

Kertis 'AyeKO' Owens represents that shift because he does not approach visibility as one isolated role. He moves across acting, writing, directing and music while building a body of work that can travel from Milwaukee-made productions to major streaming platforms. The image is polished; the deeper story is repetition—auditions, sets, relationships and the discipline to keep becoming more useful to a production.

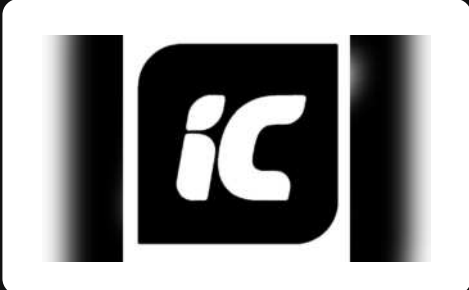
The remaining stories follow the same question: what happens after attention arrives? Makeiva Albritten turns acting credits into writing and producing. Two Milwaukee Bucks rookies inherit a franchise reset. Bernice Burgos carries street-model confidence into lasting cultural relevance. Olandria Carthen learns to convert a television moment into a career. Crystal Montgomery, George Johnson and Natasha Broxton show that cultural value lasts when somebody builds a system around it.

THE NEXT ROLE SHOULD CREATE THE NEXT OPTION

Being seen is not the finish line. The goal is leverage: a stronger contract, a new skill, a direct audience, an owned asset or an opportunity for the people working beside you. Issue 007 documents creators who understand that the screen can introduce the work, but structure determines what the work becomes.



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COVER STORY

Kertis 'AyeKO' Owens builds screen range

THE ROLE IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

BUILT FOR THE SCREEN

Milwaukee-born Kertis 'AyeKO' Owens is turning performance into a wider creative position.



KERTIS 'AYEKO' OWENS / ARTIST-SUPPLIED PORTRAIT

THE CAMERA REWARDS PREPARATION

AyeKO looks comfortable in the frame because the work began before the camera arrived. Kertis Owens has built his screen identity through repeated appearances in independent urban film—learning how to enter a scene, hold attention and give another performer something useful to play against. The result is presence that reads as natural because the preparation is not.

His credits connect Milwaukee-made storytelling to a wider streaming audience. In *Stolliez*, directed by Carvell Brooks, Owens plays TJ inside a crime drama rooted in the city. His later work includes *Jada*, *Tyrant: Like Father Like Son*, *All About a Check 2*, *Out of Darkness* and the 2026 series *The Dirty C*. The list matters because each set creates another relationship, another lesson and another piece of evidence.

RANGE IS A FORM OF SECURITY

Owens identifies himself as an actor, director, writer and music artist. That combination is more than branding. Independent productions move quickly and reward people who understand what happens on both sides of the lens. A performer who can think about story, rhythm and production becomes more valuable than a face waiting for a close-up.

The cover captures confidence. The career beneath it is being built through usefulness—showing up ready, protecting the scene and treating every role as a bridge to the next skill.

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THE CLOSE-UP CREATES VISIBILITY. THE WORK CREATES THE NEXT CALL.

SOURCES: Tubi; Apple TV; Rotten Tomatoes; Plex; official artist profiles and interviews.

COVER STORY

AyeKO expands the role into a route

THE NEXT SCENE REQUIRES CONTROL

THE ROLE BECOMES THE ROUTE

A multi-hyphenate career can turn one booking into a durable place in independent film.



KERTIS 'AYEKO' OWENS / ARTIST-SUPPLIED PORTRAIT

MILWAUKEE IS PART OF THE PERFORMANCE

AyeKO's story belongs to a regional film movement that stopped waiting for a distant industry to explain it. Stolliez places Milwaukee streets, language and pressure inside the narrative rather than treating the city as an anonymous backdrop. Owens's role as TJ becomes part of that address: the performance works because it understands the world around it.

That local specificity can travel. Free streaming platforms now place independently produced crime dramas beside studio films on the same screen. A viewer may not know the budget, the crew size or the route to distribution. The work still has to earn attention frame by frame.

CREDITS ARE RECEIPTS, NOT A FINISH LINE

Owens's expanding filmography shows forward motion, but the deeper opportunity is authorship. Writing and directing create a chance to shape the roles available to him and the performers around him. Music adds another layer of timing, tone and audience connection. Each discipline can strengthen the others when the identity remains clear.

The danger of independent visibility is mistaking availability for leverage. A title on a platform does not automatically create fair pay, ownership or a sustainable pipeline. Talent still needs accurate credits, contracts, professional media, direct audience data and relationships that survive after a project leaves the homepage.

THE SCREEN SHOULD LEAD SOMEWHERE

For AyeKO, the strongest next chapter is not simply more appearances. It is a body of work with a recognizable standard—performances that feel prepared, projects that widen his responsibility and stories that can be traced back to the communities that made them possible.

Built for the screen does not mean built only to be watched. It means built to understand the screen as a workplace, a distribution system and an asset. The artist becomes durable when every scene leaves him with more than exposure.

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A ROLE PUTS YOU IN THE FRAME. OWNERSHIP GIVES THE FRAME A FUTURE.

SOURCES: Tubi; Rotten Tomatoes; Plex; Apple TV; JuiceTalkTV; official artist materials.

THE TEA

Independent creators move onto full-length platforms

THE FEED MEETS THE SCREEN

THE AUDIENCE IS NOW THE DISTRIBUTOR

Tubi, Kickstarter and creator-led studios are shortening the distance between an idea and a national viewer.



TUBI + KICKSTARTER / FILMSTREAM COLLECTIVE

THE GATE IS MOVING

Independent filmmakers still need money, crews and finished work, but distribution is no longer controlled by one narrow doorway. Tubi's partnership with Kickstarter created a route for more than 20 fan-supported films to reach the platform, while a completion fund pledged directly to selected campaigns that needed help crossing the finish line.

The scale changes the conversation. Tubi reported nearly 100 million monthly viewers when the partnership was announced. A regional filmmaker can now imagine a path from community financing to a national screen without pretending the work began inside a major studio.

CREATORS ARE BECOMING STUDIOS

Tubi for Creators widened the model again by bringing long-form digital talent onto the service. The first group arrived with more than 500 episodes and audiences already built through YouTube and social platforms. These creators did not wait to be discovered; they proved demand before the platform meeting.

That is the tea: the audience is no longer only the final customer. It can finance the project, test the idea, create the demand and help determine what receives a larger screen. The opportunity is powerful, but creators still need to understand rights, revenue, delivery standards and the difference between being available and being promoted.



MARKETING • PROMOTIONS • BRAND STRATEGY

THE PLATFORM CAN OPEN THE DOOR. THE AUDIENCE PROVES WHO SHOULD ENTER.

SOURCES: Tubi corporate press releases; Kickstarter FilmStream Collective materials.

WHO'S TRENDING

Makeiva Albritten turns bookings into ownership

FROM EXTRA TO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

THE ACTOR BECOMES THE STUDIO

Makeiva Albritten is building a career in which performance, writing and production reinforce one another.



MAKEIVA ALBRITTEN AND JAMES PERKINS / 105.1 THE BOUNCE

THE FIRST ROLE WAS AN OPENING

Makeiva Albritten has said acting was not the original plan. She entered a production as an extra, was noticed and kept getting booked. The important turn came after the bookings: instead of treating performance as the entire business, she began using the set as an education.

Her filmography now includes *Get Paid*, *Watch Your Back*, *Rose Gold*, *Connected Through Blood*, *The Millers* and *Reginald Carter*. Credits as writer and executive producer show the direction of travel. Albritten is not only asking which character she can play; she is helping determine which story gets made.

QUALITY IS PART OF THE REPUTATION

In an interview with 105.1 The Bounce, Albritten and James Perkins described the practical standard behind their productions: picture and audio have to look and sound intentional. That concern matters in a crowded streaming market where audiences may forgive a small budget but quickly leave work that feels careless.

Ownership also changes the risk. Writing, producing and distributing require budgets, schedules, contracts and decisions that an actor can usually leave to somebody else. The reward is a larger share of the creative identity and a catalog that can keep creating opportunities after one performance ends.

Albritten's trend is not simply visibility. It is vertical movement—from appearing in the story to helping own the process that puts the story on screen.



THE BOOKING CREATES A CREDIT. THE CATALOG CREATES A COMPANY.

SOURCES: 105.1 The Bounce interview; Tubi; Apple TV; Rotten Tomatoes; Plex.

CURRENT SPORTS

Milwaukee's rookies inherit a franchise reset

THE NEXT BUCKS CHAPTER

THE FUTURE ARRIVES IN PAIRS

Brayden Burries and Nate Ament enter Milwaukee with opportunity, pressure and room to grow together.



BRAYDEN BURRIES AND NATE AMENT / SPECTRUM NEWS 1 WISCONSIN

THE DRAFT CHANGED THE TIMELINE

Milwaukee selected guard Brayden Burries with the 10th pick and forward Nate Ament at No. 13 in the 2026 NBA Draft. They became the Bucks' first pair of top-15 selections in the same class and arrived as the franchise began a new era. The opportunity is immediate; the expectation must remain patient.

Burries brings size and scoring instincts from Arizona. Ament offers length, movement and two-way possibility from Tennessee. Neither prospect should be asked to replace an entire championship identity. Their job is more practical: learn the league, absorb coaching and become dependable enough that Milwaukee can build the next decision around real evidence.

DEVELOPMENT MUST BE VISIBLE

New coach Taylor Jenkins introduced both players with direct feedback. Ament described a predraft meeting in which Jenkins reviewed his five worst college plays; Burries received the same treatment. That detail matters because a rebuild cannot survive on highlights alone. The organization has to make correction part of the culture.

Their progress will be measured in habits before headlines: defensive communication, shot selection, physical strength, recovery and the ability to respond after teams expose a weakness. If the rookies grow together, the Bucks gain more than talent. They gain a shared timeline.



MENTAL WELLNESS • ADVOCACY • PREVENTION

UGHINC.ORG • MILWAUKEE

THE DRAFT CREATES POSSIBILITY. DEVELOPMENT CREATES THE NEXT ERA.

SOURCES: NBA.com/AP; Milwaukee Bucks; Spectrum News 1 Wisconsin.

BEHIND THE GAME

Milwaukee filmmakers build the set around themselves

THE CITY WRITES ITS OWN FRAME

THE LOCATION BECOMES THE LANGUAGE

Independent productions such as *Stolliez* show what happens when Milwaukee is treated as story, workforce and audience.



MILWAUKEE FILM CREW / 53206: MILWAUKEE PRODUCTION STILL

THE CITY IS NOT GENERIC SCENERY

Stolliez does not disguise Milwaukee as somewhere else. Directed by Carvell Brooks, the 2023 crime drama places four young men inside a world of stolen cars, reckless driving and immediate consequences. Kertis Owens appears as TJ, joining a cast and crew that understand the streets as lived geography rather than an establishing shot.

That specificity is the asset. Independent urban film often reaches viewers because it carries details larger productions smooth away: the cadence, the weather, the block, the cars, the humor and the pressure. A local audience recognizes itself; an outside audience receives a place with an address.

A MOVIE IS ALSO A WORKFORCE

Behind the cast is a production economy. Producers organize money and locations. Camera teams turn limited time into usable coverage. Sound crews protect the dialogue. Editors build rhythm after everyone leaves the set. Wardrobe, makeup, food, transportation and promotion determine whether the project feels complete.

Milwaukee's next film breakthrough will not come from one title alone. It will come when each title leaves behind more trained people, clearer credits, reusable equipment, professional rates and relationships strong enough to carry another production.

The game behind the game is infrastructure. A city becomes a film city when making the next movie is easier because the last one existed.

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FILM • SERIES • DOCUMENTARIES

THE FILM ENDS. THE WORKFORCE SHOULD REMAIN.

SOURCES: Rotten Tomatoes; Tubi; CLE Entertainment; official cast and production materials.

CURRENT BEAUTY

Bernice Burgos still owns the frame

BEAUTY OF THE WEEK

CONFIDENCE NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE

Bernice Burgos brought street-model presence to the digital era and turned lasting attention into her own lane.



BERNICE BURGOS / SUMMER SWIMWEAR PORTRAIT, TMZ

THE LOOK WAS BUILT IN THE CULTURE

Before the creator economy had a name, Bernice Burgos understood the value of presence. The Bronx-raised model came through nightlife, music-video culture and street fashion, where one strong image could travel from a flyer to a video screen and become part of the conversation. Her appeal came from confidence, curves, style and a look the culture immediately recognized.

Street magazines have always made room for women whose beauty moved through hip-hop, clubs and neighborhood fashion before mainstream media decided the look was valuable. Burgos carried that tradition into social media, where the model could control the frame and speak directly to her audience.

LONGEVITY IS THE REAL FLEX

A swimsuit photograph can stop the page. Staying relevant after the page turns requires discipline. Burgos has maintained a clear visual identity across changing platforms without abandoning the confidence that introduced her. **CURRENT BEAUTY** celebrates women of the culture who command the lens without apology.

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THE PHOTO GETS ATTENTION. CONFIDENCE MAKES IT TIMELESS.

SOURCES: Bernice Burgos official Instagram; Bold & Beautiful; TMZ summer swimwear gallery; official interviews.

MODELS MAKING MOVES

Olandria Carthen moves beyond reality television

THE CAMERA FOUND HER. FASHION KEPT WATCHING.

ATTENTION BECOMES POSITION

Olandria Carthen is converting a television breakthrough into representation, campaigns and a controlled public identity.



OLANDRIA CARTHEN / GLAMOUR, EMMA ANDERSON

THE MOMENT ARRIVED ALL AT ONCE

Before Love Island USA, Olandria Carthen worked in elevator sales. After season seven, millions of viewers knew her as Bama Barbie and followed the relationship they named Nicolandria. The speed of that change is the opportunity and the danger: attention can create a market before the person inside it has time to decide what the market should mean.

Carthen's next moves placed her closer to fashion and long-term representation. She signed with United Talent Agency, appeared in major campaigns and fashion-week settings, and carried her television visibility into magazine covers where the styling could develop a more deliberate image.

THE MODEL MUST CONTROL THE NARRATIVE

A reality audience often believes it owns access to the person it watched. Modeling requires a different relationship. The frame becomes intentional: wardrobe, photographer, publication and brand partnership all communicate where the talent wants to sit in the culture.

Carthen's advantage is not only reach. Dark-skinned women saw themselves centered, desired and styled without apology. That meaning increases the value of the platform, but it also raises the standard for partnerships. Every campaign teaches the audience what the brand believes her image represents.

The move is to become more than the season that introduced her. A durable career will come from selecting work that expands the image without letting the internet consume the person.

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THE SHOW CREATED THE SPOTLIGHT. CHOICE DETERMINES WHAT IT REVEALS.

SOURCES: Glamour; Variety; UTA announcement; official campaign materials.

STREET STORIES

Crystal Montgomery gives denim another life

THE MATERIAL ALREADY HAS A MEMORY

THE CANVAS REFUSES TO STAY FLAT

Milwaukee artist Crystal Montgomery uses recycled denim, dimensional hair and Black figures to make history leave the frame.



CRYSTAL MONTGOMERY / MILWAUKEE NNS, CATCHLIGHT LOCAL

CREATIVITY WAS THE FAMILY LANGUAGE

Crystal Montgomery grew up surrounded by making. Her father worked in stained glass, her mother sewed and her grandmother quilted. At 11, Montgomery split the casing of fallen telephone wire and turned the color inside into bracelets. The materials changed; the instinct to see another use remained.

Her current work combines paint, recycled denim and three-dimensional hair that reaches outside the expected edge of a canvas. Black figures do not sit quietly inside the frame. Texture gives them presence, while the reused fabric carries evidence of another life.

DENIM ARRIVES WITH A STORY

Montgomery describes denim as universal and resilient. It can belong to labor, fashion, childhood or memory. A local supplier gives her early access to discarded clothing, but the material is not treated as waste. Seams, fades and wear become part of the portrait.

After years of freelance creative work, Montgomery enrolled at Milwaukee Area Technical College and pushed herself to claim the word artist. The Black Business Boost Program helped her mount a first exhibition, adding business structure to a practice that had long existed.

The street story is not only what gets thrown away. It is what an artist can retrieve, recognize and return to the community with more meaning than it had before.

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THE FABRIC CARRIES THE PAST. THE ART GIVES IT ANOTHER FUTURE.

SOURCES: Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service; Black Business Boost Program; artist interviews.

WHAT THEY MISSED

George E. Johnson put Black beauty on the screen

FROM A \$250 LOAN TO WALL STREET

THE BRAND THAT FUNDED THE IMAGE

Johnson Products sold hair care, sponsored Soul Train and proved Black consumers could build a national market.



GEORGE E. JOHNSON SR. / AUTHOR PORTRAIT

THE PRODUCT ANSWERED A REAL NEED

George E. Johnson Sr. began Johnson Products in Chicago in 1954 with a \$250 loan and an understanding the broader beauty industry had ignored: Black hair care was not a niche afterthought. It was a market with specific needs, loyal customers and cultural meaning.

Ultra Sheen and Afro Sheen became household names because the products traveled with a message. Black style did not need to be corrected before it could be celebrated. Packaging, advertising and retail presence gave consumers images of themselves connected to polish, confidence and modern life.

SOUL TRAIN TURNED SPONSORSHIP INTO INFRASTRUCTURE

Johnson Products became the first national sponsor of Soul Train. The company did more than buy commercial time; its support helped a Black-owned television program remain visible while the program returned value by placing the brand beside music, dance and style every week.

In 1971, Johnson Products became the first Black-owned company listed on the American Stock Exchange. The milestone demonstrated what can happen when cultural insight is connected to manufacturing, distribution and finance.

What they missed is the system behind the shine. A beauty company helped finance a television institution, and the television institution expanded the market for the beauty company. Representation became durable because business and culture were allowed to strengthen each other.

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THE PRODUCT SOLD THE LOOK. THE COMPANY HELPED KEEP THE CULTURE ON AIR.

SOURCES: Associated Press; George E. Johnson Sr., Afro Sheen; Johnson Products history.

BOSS MOVES / HUSTLE TO BUSINESS

Natasha Broxton scales recycled value

MILWAUKEE'S INDUSTRIAL ENTREPRENEUR

WHAT OTHERS DISCARD BECOMES INVENTORY

Select Auto Parts & Sales turns tested recycled components, same-day service and digital expansion into a national business case.



NATASHA BROXTON / SELECT AUTO PARTS & SALES, CO—

THE BUSINESS SOLVES AN EXPENSIVE PROBLEM

A disabled vehicle creates pressure immediately. Customers need an engine, transmission, battery, wheel or tire without paying a price that makes the repair impossible. Natasha Broxton built Select Auto Parts & Sales around that gap: tested recycled parts, organized inventory and same-day service from a large indoor Milwaukee facility.

Founded in 2012, the family-owned company operates from a 125,000-square-foot site on West Cornell Street. It serves walk-in customers, commercial fleets and government agencies while standing among the few Black- and woman-owned auto recyclers in the United States.

THE INVENTORY MUST BECOME INFORMATION

A warehouse full of parts creates value only when the right customer can find the right component quickly. Select is expanding e-commerce and real-time inventory so the facility can reach buyers beyond Milwaukee. That move turns local stock into a searchable national asset.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recognized the company as a 2025 Champion of Adaptability. The title fits an industry built around recovery: extract usable value, verify it, organize it and move it back into service.

OWNERSHIP CHANGES WHO INDUSTRY CAN EMPLOY

Broxton's position also widens the image of Black entrepreneurship. The company is industrial, operational and physically large. Growth can create skilled work in inventory, sales, logistics, testing and digital systems—jobs connected to an asset the business owns.

The boss move is not simply seeing value where others see scrap. It is building the warehouse, workforce and information system that can prove the value at scale.

THE PART WAS DISCARDED. THE SYSTEM RETURNED IT TO WORK.

SOURCES: CO— by U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Select Auto Parts & Sales; Shepherd Express.

RICARDA AMOR TEQUILA



"JUST A BETTER
TASTE OF LIFE"

**REMEMBER TO
DRINK LIKE A BOSS**





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