

THE CURRENT

M A G A Z I N E DOCUMENTING THE CULTURE AS IT HAPPENS

ISSUE 008

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

HIP-HOP'S MOST TALKED ABOUT DOCUMENTARIAN

TRAP LORE ROSS WHO CONTROLS THE STORY

WHO CONTROLS THE STORY?

The creators, systems and decisions shaping what culture sees and remembers

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**"Anybody can make noise.
Very few can make it move."**
— KB Barrell, ThePlaymaker

THE 12 LAWS OF STREET TEAM MARKETING

FROM THE MAN WHO BROUGHT STREET TEAM WORK BACK TO THE MUSIC INDUSTRY!

STREET TEAM WORK, MAKES THE DREAM WORK

THE 12 LAWS OF STREET TEAM MARKETING

1. NEVER CONFUSE MOTION WITH MARKETING Motion feels busy. Marketing moves product.	7. CONSISTENCY WINS Daily presence beats random hype.
2. DISTRIBUTION BEATS TALENT The best product loses without reach.	8. SYSTEMS BEAT MOMENTS Structure scales. Excitement fades.
3. OWNERSHIP IS THE ENDGAME If you don't own it, you don't control it.	9. FANS OVER FOLLOWERS Loyalty pays longer than likes.
4. RELATIONSHIPS BEAT ALGORITHMS People convert. Platforms fluctuate.	10. CULTURE OVER CLOUT Hype fades. Community lasts.
5. TOUCH THE PAVEMENT The streets validate what the internet amplifies.	11. CONTROL THE NARRATIVE If you don't tell your story, someone else will.
6. VISIBILITY IS CURRENCY If they don't see you, you don't exist.	12. EXECUTE RELENTLESSLY Ideas don't win. Execution does.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

THE CURRENT POSITION

THE STORY IS AN ASSET

Issue 008 follows the people deciding what culture sees, hears and remembers.

THE NEW GATEKEEPER MAY BE ONE PERSON

The old media system made control easy to identify. A label, network, editor or studio decided which story reached the public. The new system looks open because anyone can publish. But publishing and being seen are not the same thing. Today the gatekeeper may be a creator with a million subscribers, a venue owner holding a no-play list, a platform ranking the feed or an AI operation hiding behind a character.

CONTROL CREATES RESPONSIBILITY

Trap Lore Ross is the right cover for this issue because his success sits inside the central tension of modern media. He made research watchable and built a direct audience without waiting for a network. At the same time, the stories he documents involve real allegations, real loss and living communities. The creator who controls the frame also controls what millions of viewers may accept as history.

THE OTHER PAGES FOLLOW THE SAME QUESTION

Milwaukee artists challenge a reported playlist policy. The Bucks begin life after Giannis. An AI rapper reveals the business behind manufactured identity. Black beauty founders share the shelf instead of fighting for one slot. Anok Yai turns a fashion appearance into authorship. TRUE Skool turns the park into a classroom. Ophelia DeVore reminds us that Black talent has always built its own infrastructure when the door stayed closed. LaRussell proves that ownership can travel into partnership.

DOCUMENTATION SHOULD LEAVE RECEIPTS

THE CURRENT is built to feel like social media in print, but speed cannot erase standards. We separate allegation from verdict, identify the source and preserve the local voices that national feeds can miss. The goal is not simply to repeat the conversation. It is to document who shaped it, who benefited and what the culture should remember after the trend moves on.



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THE PERSON WHO CONTROLS THE FRAME CONTROLS WHAT THE AUDIENCE REMEMBERS.

COVER STORY

THE DOCUMENTARY CREATOR WHO MADE RESEARCH WATCHABLE

WHO CONTROLS THE STORY?

Trap Lore Ross built a mass audience by turning rap history, public records and internet archives into long-form cultural narratives.



TRAP LORE ROSS / ISSUE 008 COVER ART

THE FORMAT BECAME THE ADVANTAGE

Trap Lore Ross describes himself as a hip-hop historian. His official YouTube channel now reaches roughly 1.5 million subscribers with more than 270 videos. That scale was not built by shrinking every story into a clip. Ross went in the opposite direction, publishing documentaries that can run for hours and asking viewers to stay with timelines, characters and consequences. In an attention economy trained to swipe, duration became his point of difference.

RESEARCH IS THE PRODUCT

The videos commonly organize public interviews, social posts, archived footage and reporting into a single narrative. The value is not one rare piece of information. It is the assembly: finding the pieces, establishing chronology and giving the viewer a reason to keep watching. That process turned a researcher behind a laptop into a recognizable media brand.

THE TITLE OPENS THE DOOR

A documentary still competes in the same feed as comedy, music and breaking news. Ross understands packaging. The title, thumbnail and opening minutes create the invitation; the timeline and evidence have to justify the click. His growth shows that deep work can travel when the presentation is direct enough to meet the audience where it already is.

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THE PLATFORM REWARDS THE CLICK. THE AUDIENCE REWARDS THE WORK.

Sources: Trap Lore Ross official YouTube channel; No Jumper interview; VladTV interview; public channel posts reviewed Aug. 2026.

COVER STORY

THE STORYTELLER ALSO HAS TO ANSWER FOR THE FRAME

DOCUMENTATION IS POWER

The same editing decisions that make a documentary compelling also determine whose voice is centered, what context survives and what the audience remembers.



TRAP LORE ROSS / ISSUE 008 COVER ART

THE EDITOR CHOOSES THE MAP

Every documentary is an argument about importance. The creator chooses the beginning, the sequence, the turning points and the final image. With street rap and real-world violence, those choices carry unusual weight. Public fascination can sit beside grief, criminal allegations and living families. A clean timeline may help viewers understand events, but it can also make painful history feel like entertainment if the human cost disappears behind the plot.

ALLEGATION IS NOT VERDICT

The strongest cultural reporting separates documented fact, public allegation, opinion and internet rumor. That discipline matters even more when a video reaches millions of people and may become the version of events most viewers remember. Clear sourcing, visible corrections and restraint are not obstacles to storytelling. They are the infrastructure that allows the story to last.

THE BRAND LIVES AFTER THE UPLOAD

Ross has become a participant in the conversation he documents. Artists, fans and critics debate his methods as intensely as they debate his conclusions. That pressure is now part of the business. The next level for long-form hip-hop media will not be measured only by views. It will be measured by whether creators can hold attention without losing accuracy, context or respect for the people whose lives supply the material.

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CONTROL OF THE STORY CREATES A DUTY TO CONTROL THE STANDARD.

Sources: Trap Lore Ross official channel and interviews; THE CURRENT review of public videos and creator statements through Aug. 2026.

THE TEA

THE MILWAUKEE PLAYLIST CONTROVERSY MOVED FROM TEXTS TO THE STREET

WHEN THE PLAYLIST BECAME THE POLICY

A reported no-play directive at a Brady Street bar triggered backlash after local artists saw Black hip-hop and Milwaukee rap singled out.



PHOTO: TMJ4 / JENNA RAE

THE RECEIPTS CHANGED THE CONVERSATION

TMJ4 reported on Aug. 25 that it obtained text messages attributed to an alleged manager of The Garage. The message reportedly told DJs that 41 named rap and hip-hop artists could not be played and included the phrase 'NO MILWAUKEE RAP.' The report also showed a matching laminated list at the DJ table and said noncompliance could cost DJs their gigs.

LOCAL ARTISTS HEARD A BIGGER MESSAGE

The reaction was not only about song selection. Milwaukee performers described the directive as a rejection of the city inside a venue that benefits from local nightlife and local DJs. A club can manage its atmosphere, but a list focused entirely on Black artists raises questions that genre labels cannot settle by themselves.

REPORT THE CLAIM WITH THE LIMITS

THE CURRENT has not independently authenticated the messages or determined who approved the list. That distinction matters. The verified story is that TMJ4 published the documents, local artists responded publicly and the policy shown in the report became a citywide cultural issue. The next responsibility belongs to ownership: explain the standard, the decision chain and whether the directive remains in effect.

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THEPLAYMAKER LLC - MARKETING - PROMOTIONS - BRAND STRATEGY

A VENUE CAN SET A VIBE. IT STILL HAS TO ANSWER FOR THE LINE IT DRAWS.

Source: TMJ4 Lighthouse, Jenna Rae and Jeffery Morris, Aug. 25, 2026.

WHO'S TRENDING

TORONTO'S NEWEST RAP DISRUPTOR BUILT A SOUND FROM MULTIPLE SCENES

TWENTYTHREE MAKES THE INTERNET FEEL LOCAL

The Iranian-born, Toronto-based rapper-producer turns regional club music, online discovery and collective identity into a fast-rising brand.



PHOTO: @THERESBLOODONYOU / PITCHFORK

THE PRODUCER BECAME THE FRONT MAN

twentythree first built momentum through production and the Greezy Gang collective before pushing his own voice forward. Universal Music Canada released his nine-track debut mixtape, 6ix Pop, on June 26. The project treats Toronto less like one fixed sound and more like a meeting point for West Coast drums, rave energy, post-OVO atmosphere and internet-era rap.

QUEEN ST OPENED THE DOOR

The viral record 'Queen St' gave listeners an entry point, but the larger advantage is authorship. twentythree produces, performs and helps define the collective around him. Pitchfork noted that the project even pulls from Milwaukee lowend alongside other regional dance-rap traditions. That connection shows how quickly local rhythms now travel through producer communities and short-form video.

THE TREND HAS A STRUCTURE

Internet momentum disappears when the artist cannot name the next product. 6ix Pop gives the attention a catalog, while Greezy Gang gives the catalog a world. The next test is whether that world can move beyond one viral record into touring, collaborations and a recognizable standard that survives the feed.

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A VIRAL SONG OPENS THE TAB. A WORLD MAKES PEOPLE STAY.

Sources: Pitchfork, Aug. 28, 2026; Universal Music Canada, June 26, 2026; Complex, July 2026.

CURRENT SPORTS

MILWAUKEE ENTERS ITS FIRST FULL SEASON AFTER A FRANCHISE-SHAPING TRADE

AFTER GIANNIS, THE CITY MEETS THE RESET

The Bucks traded the greatest player of their modern era. Every decision will be measured against what left.



PHOTO: JEFF HANISCH / IMAGN IMAGES

THE BLOCKBUSTER ENDED AN ERA

Milwaukee officially sent Giannis Antetokounmpo and Bobby Portis to Miami in July. The Bucks received Tyler Herro, Jaime Jaquez Jr., Kel'el Ware, Kasparas Jakucionis, the No. 13 selection used on Nate Ament and additional draft considerations. The transaction did more than change the roster. It removed the player who defined the franchise's competitive identity for 13 seasons.

THE RETURN HAS TO BECOME A SYSTEM

Herro brings proven scoring. Ware, Jaquez, Jakucionis and the two 2026 rookies bring different timelines and development needs. Milwaukee cannot replace Giannis with one person. The only credible response is a connected system: player development, honest minutes, asset discipline and a style that does not pretend the old roster still exists.

THE CITY WILL REMEMBER BOTH SIDES

Antetokounmpo called Milwaukee his city in a farewell message. That history remains intact. The Bucks now have to build a future strong enough to stand beside it. Every reset asks fans to exchange certainty for possibility. The organization earns patience by showing exactly what the new pieces are being developed to become.

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MENTAL WELLNESS - ADVOCACY - PREVENTION

A SUPERSTAR LEAVES A VACUUM. STRUCTURE DECIDES WHAT FILLS IT.

Sources: Milwaukee Bucks official transaction; NBA.com trade coverage and farewell report, July 2026.

BEHIND THE GAME

AN AI RAPPER SHOWED HOW IDENTITY, OUTRAGE AND MONEY CAN BE ENGINEERED

THE ARTIST WAS NEVER REAL

The Danny Bones investigation exposed the human operation behind a synthetic performer and the business incentives attached to manufactured controversy.



IMAGE: THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

THE CHARACTER HID THE COMPANY

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism reported that Danny Bones was an AI-generated rap persona fronting an operation called the Node Project. Its reporting connected the project to political campaign work and later identified the producer and animator behind the character. The revelation matters because the audience was not only reacting to a song. It was reacting to a designed identity with real people, strategy and financing behind it.

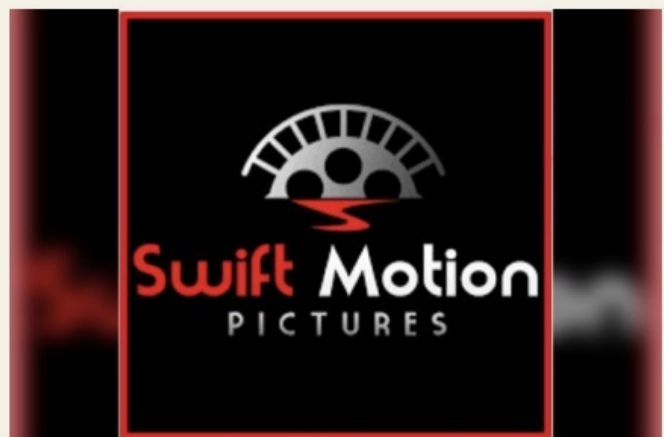
OUTRAGE BECAME DISTRIBUTION

The project used inflammatory political content to generate attention, then moved toward memberships, merchandise, donations and platform revenue. The Bureau also reported that social platforms removed or blocked some accounts and videos. That pattern is the new behind-the-scenes game: a synthetic face can attract human loyalty, while the operators remain outside the frame until reporting forces disclosure.

TRANSPARENCY IS NOW PART OF MEDIA LITERACY

Audiences need more than an AI label. They need to know who owns the character, who receives the money and whether political groups are financing the content. Music has always used personas. The difference is that a synthetic performer can be produced at scale, never tire and say whatever the operator believes will travel fastest.

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FILM - SERIES - DOCUMENTARIES

WHEN THE FACE IS SYNTHETIC, FOLLOW THE PEOPLE AND THE MONEY.

Sources: The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, March 12, March 26 and Aug. 21, 2026.

CURRENT BEAUTY

THREE BLACK-FOUNDED BRANDS TURNED COLLABORATION INTO A MARKET RESPONSE

THE GLOW IS A JOINT VENTURE

Brown Sugar Babe, Danessa Myricks Beauty and Black Girl Sunscreen packaged shared visibility as a practical growth strategy.



PHOTO: COURTESY / BYRDIE

THE BUNDLE CARRIES A MESSAGE

Maekaeda Gibbons, Danessa Myricks and Shontay Lundy joined their brands for the Golden Hour Bundle in 2026. Byrdie reported that the collection combined body oil, a skin-blurring balm, glow serum and sunscreen. The products made sense together, but the larger statement was strategic: Black beauty founders do not have to compete for one narrow shelf, headline or customer.

SHARED TRUST LOWERS THE DISTANCE

Each founder arrived with an existing audience and a different point of authority. When the brands collaborate, discovery moves in every direction. A customer who trusts one product is introduced to two more through a package that feels curated rather than random. That is more valuable than a one-day social-media shout-out because the partnership creates a transaction, data and a reason to return.

COLLABORATION NEEDS OPERATIONS

The visual campaign gets attention. Inventory, fulfillment, margins and customer service determine whether the idea can scale. The Golden Hour model works because the cultural message sits on top of complementary products. Community is not being used as decoration; it is being translated into a shared commercial system.



COMPETITION CHASES THE SAME LIGHT. COLLABORATION MAKES MORE OF IT.

Source: Byrdie, 'These 3 Black Beauty Founders Are Proving Collaboration Is Better Than Competition,' June 2026.

MODELS MAKING MOVES**ANOK YAI TURNED THE MET GALA INTO A CONTROLLED ACT OF VISUAL STORYTELLING**

THE MODEL BECOMES THE MESSAGE

The 2026 Black Madonna look proved that a major fashion image can carry concept, collaboration and cultural authorship at the same time.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES / EASTERN EYE

THE LOOK STARTED WITH AN IDEA

At the 2026 Met Gala, Anok Yai appeared in custom Balenciaga as a Black Madonna rendered like a living sculpture. Vogue reported that the concept was developed with creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli and carried a message of hope and resilience. The gown, sculptural hood, metallic skin and tear details operated as one image rather than separate styling choices.

THE CAMERA CAPTURED A TEAM

Vanity Fair described a preparation process involving prosthetics, specialized beauty work and a large team working across the look. That labor matters. A memorable red-carpet moment may circulate as one photograph, but the image is the final output of design, fabrication, styling, makeup, hair, lighting and performance. The model connects every department in the frame.

INFLUENCE MEANS AUTHORSHIP

Yai's position allows her to do more than wear a garment. She can help determine what the appearance says and how Black beauty is represented at fashion's most visible table. The strongest model is not a blank canvas. She is a creative partner whose presence changes the meaning of the work.

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THE RUNWAY SHOWS THE LOOK. INFLUENCE DECIDES WHAT IT MEANS.

Sources: Vogue, May 2026; Vanity Fair, May 6, 2026; Balenciaga Met Gala coverage.

STREET STORIES

TRUE SKOOL BROUGHT HIP-HOP LEGACY, BUSINESS EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SPACE TOGETHER

THE PARK JAM BECAME THE CLASSROOM

Milwaukee's 2026 Summer Park Jam united performance, business education, breaking and graffiti.



PHOTO: ONMILWAUKEE

THE LINEUP CONNECTED GENERATIONS

TRUE Skool's Summer Park Jam Weekend brought Yo-Yo, Rah Digga, Sweet Tee and Da Odd Couple to downtown Milwaukee in August. The all-ages program combined live performance with local vendors, dance and graffiti battles. That mixture reflects how hip-hop was built: the music, movement, visual language and marketplace occupying the same space.

CEO SESSIONS MOVED BEHIND THE STAGE

The weekend also included free CEO Sessions at the Marcus Performing Arts Center. Creative leaders discussed how to build, grow and monetize cultural businesses. That programming matters because young artists often see the finished performance without seeing budgets, partnerships, sponsorships, booking and brand systems that make the stage possible.

PUBLIC CULTURE CREATES PUBLIC VALUE

A free park jam lowers the cost of entry for families and future creators. It also gives local vendors and performers a place to be discovered. Milwaukee's strongest cultural events do more than import a headliner. They connect legacy names to neighborhood talent and leave knowledge, relationships and economic activity behind after the speakers shut off.

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THE STREET STARTED THE CULTURE. STRUCTURE HELPS THE STREET KEEP IT.

Sources: Marcus Performing Arts Center; TRUE Skool 2026 Summer Park Jam announcements.

WHAT THEY MISSED**OPHELIA DEVORE BUILT THE SCHOOL, THE AGENCY AND THE STANDARD BEFORE THE INDUSTRY OPENED**

SHE TAUGHT THE IMAGE TO SPEAK

The pioneering model and entrepreneur created professional pathways for Black talent when mainstream fashion treated exclusion as normal.



PHOTO: COURIER NEWS ARCHIVE

THE AGENCY CREATED ACCESS

In 1946, Ophelia DeVore helped establish the Grace Del Marco Agency. She later became sole owner and developed the Ophelia DeVore School of Self-Development and Modeling. The operation represented and trained Black talent at a time when leading agencies and publications routinely denied them opportunity.

TRAINING BECAME CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The school prepared models for the technical and social demands of the business, while the agency connected that preparation to real work. Sources including the Smithsonian's Searchable Museum and The HistoryMakers connect DeVore's organization to future stars such as Diahann Carroll, Cicely Tyson and Richard Roundtree. The institution did not wait for representation to improve. It built a pipeline capable of forcing the image forward.

THE LESSON STILL APPLIES

Visibility without training can produce a moment. Training without access can produce frustration. DeVore joined the two and created leverage for people the market had been trained to overlook. Modern creator academies, talent incubators and community studios follow the same operating principle, whether they know her name or not.

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SHE DID NOT ASK THE INDUSTRY TO SEE BLACK TALENT. SHE PREPARED IT TO ARRIVE.

BOSS MOVES / HUSTLE TO BUSINESS

LARUSSELL USED INDEPENDENCE TO NEGOTIATE PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT ERASING OWNERSHIP

THE DEAL MET HIM AT HIS VALUE

After building Good Compenny and a direct audience, the Vallejo artist joined Roc Nation while publicly emphasizing control of his masters and publishing.



PHOTO: METRO SILICON VALLEY

THE LEVERAGE CAME BEFORE THE MEETING

LaRussell did not arrive at Roc Nation as an empty artist waiting to be developed. He had already built Good Compenny, released a deep catalog and created a direct-to-fan culture around performance and community. KQED reported in February that his agreement with Roc Nation preserved his ownership of masters and publishing, according to the artist.

INDEPENDENT DOES NOT MEAN ISOLATED

The strongest independent strategy is not permanent distance from every company. It is the ability to choose a partner after the artist has created proof, audience and options. Roc Nation can add reach, relationships and infrastructure. LaRussell brings the catalog, brand and community that make those resources worth deploying.

OWNERSHIP CHANGES THE CONVERSATION

A traditional deal often begins with the company financing the risk and controlling the asset. LaRussell's path began with years of self-financed proof. That history changes the negotiation because the artist is not selling a theory. He is bringing a working system to a larger table. The move is not independence ending. It is independence converting into leverage.

PLACE YOUR AD HERE

BUILD THE PROOF FIRST. THEN MAKE THE PARTNERSHIP RESPECT THE ASSET.

Sources: KQED, Feb. 4, 2026; Roc Nation artist listings; LaRussell interviews and Good Compenny channels.

RICARDA AMOR TEQUILA



"JUST A BETTER
TASTE OF LIFE"

**REMEMBER TO
DRINK LIKE A BOSS**





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