



Freak Kingdom: Hunter S. Thompson's Manic Ten-Year Crusade Against American Fascism

Timothy Denevi

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The story of Hunter S. Thompson's crusade against Richard Nixon and the threat of fascism in America--and the devastating price he paid for it

Hunter S. Thompson is often misremembered as a wise-cracking, drug-addled cartoon character. This book reclaims him for what he truly was: a fearless opponent of corruption and fascism, one who sacrificed his future well-being to fight against it, rewriting the rules of journalism and political satire in the process. This skillfully told and dramatic story shows how Thompson saw through Richard Nixon's treacherous populism and embarked on a life-defining campaign to stop it. In his fevered effort to expose institutional injustice, Thompson pushed himself far beyond his natural limits, sustained by drugs, mania, and little else. For ten years, he cast aside his old ambitions, troubled his family, and likely hastened his own decline, along the way producing some of the best political writing in our history.

This timely biography recalls a period of anger and derangement in American politics, and one writer with the guts to tell the truth.

Freak Kingdom: Hunter S. Thompson's Manic Ten-Year Crusade Against American Fascism Details

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From Reader Review Freak Kingdom: Hunter S. Thompson's Manic Ten-Year Crusade Against American Fascism for online ebook

Jack says

If you want to pull back the curtain and see what made HST so brilliant during the 60s and 70s, this book is as close as it gets to capturing the man's incredible depth of expression and imagination.

Aaron Domzalski says

The focus on HST's politics and writing style was a refreshing break from other books that seem preoccupied with stories about drug abuse and outlandish behavior. In the end, "Freak Kingdom" does a good job in showing that, in the long run, some of those vices actually damaged his writing more than it enhanced it.

Wayne Turmel says

As a big fan of Hunter Thompson, this book covered a lot of well-known territory, but I learned enough new information and got pointed in the direction of some material I needed to read on my own. Not brilliant, but well worth the read.

Jan Boyd says

Denevi makes history read like a novel. I learned things about American history that I never knew and came away with a completely different opinion of HST's writing than I'd had before. A great idea superbly executed.

Theodore Kinni says

Read an advance copy--really makes me miss HST. It provides the political and personal context for his best work: "Hell's Angels;" "F&L in Las Vegas;" and "F&L: On the Campaign Trail of '72." If you love that stuff, you'll love this.

Maurice Tougas says

Back when I was a young reporter (not a "journalist"; too pretentious to me) I read a lot of Hunter S.

Thompson. Everybody in the newspaper business did. I think a lot of us aspired to write with the verve and style and flat-out guts that Thompson displayed.

Denevi's book reveals the torture that Thompson inflicted upon himself (alcoholism, drug addition, beatings by Hell's Angels and police) in his relentless attack on American fascism. Much of the book is a recap of the period from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, when the entire American system seemed to be crumbling. It provides a reminder for people who remember that time, and an education for those who do not.

I hope this book revives interest in Thompson. The original "gonzo" journalist blazed the trail that many have attempted to follow, with little success (the exception, and closest heir to the gonzo throne, is Matt Taibi of Rolling Stone). I'm going to put *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail 1972* on my reading list for the year ... assuming I can find a copy.

Quinn Andreas says

As a person that really didn't know a whole lot about HST, I enjoyed the chronological format of this book in what seems to be the most relevant era in his career. Truth be told, I always thought HST to be an overrated eccentric writer. Recent pop culture turned him into an icon that I really found annoying. I had read small pieces of his work and found both brilliance and hilarity, but since I didn't live through that era, it didn't necessarily connect with me. This bio made me see his career on a new light. I respect his crusade for democracy and candid insight, even if he remained a flawed and selfish person. Maybe I will reread some of his work, especially some of the essays and editorials from this book. As a side note, In the era of trump, I also couldn't help but see the similarities HST wrote about Nixon, Goldwater, and much of the GOP politics of the late 60's. I'm sure the author chose some of the quotes he added with this in mind.

Evan says

By 1974, Hunter S. Thompson was a spent husk. During the first decade of his career he had risen to fame -- if not fortune; had already written his best books, done his most probing and passionate reporting, invented a new style of "gonzo" journalism in which the truth didn't always have to do with objective fact but with the revealing of its essence, and, perhaps most importantly for the story of this book, arrived at a place where he could witness the downfall of the man who -- in his time and according to him -- most represented the ugly face of American fascism, Richard Nixon.

As Nixon prepared to board his helicopter for his last flight from the White House, all of America's press was in Washington to see it; all except the one journalist who most vociferously decried his rise to and achievement of power -- Thompson, who at that point was lounging in a pool thousands of miles away in California, watching the collapse on a portable TV. Thompson was literally adrift, giving no shits and missing one of the countless deadlines he so often would heretofore. Drugs, exhaustion, family strife, and the unending financial woes that dogged him despite critical acclaim for his work all helped contribute to the collapse of Thompson's work ethic and clarity of vision.

But, perhaps more deeply, as this book seems to posit, the sheer weight of carrying through life an idealistic optimism that was never rewarded because of the relentlessly horrible reality of the world had finally defeated the author. Nixon's departure was no time for celebration. The political structures, the dirty backroom deals, the cynical manipulations and disinformation campaigns that kept the public dumb and jingoistic and forever yoked to a system designed to hamper their upward mobility and welfare were still all

too well entrenched -- and, as we see today, have worsened beyond even what Thompson could have imagined at the time. In the face of the soul-crushing nature of American politics, with public problems festering and seemingly or willfully insoluble -- ignored or mischaracterized by vested interests while those who pinpoint them and demand sensible solutions are demonized -- Thompson morphed from a Shakespearean fool shouting his acid critiques in humorous prose into a straight-up caricature. It turned out to be more lucrative for him that way. But it was a Faustian kind of deal; it also made him less believable and dismissible.

Before I say any more, let's get right to the point: Timothy Denevi has written a magnificent book, and written it in an elegiac, meltingly beautiful way. If the rather clunky title oversells the theme a bit, it can be forgiven. Large swaths of the book cover biographical details of Thompson's life already familiar to the writer's devotees, but even here the similarities to other HST biographies disappears. This isn't just another chronological account of Thompson as merely a colorful and eccentric instigator of antics, but a genuine attempt to understand the ideals that motivated his most passionate work.

Denevi clearly regards Thompson as a hero, but makes the case not by repeating the man's comical exploits and legendary alpha-male badassery; rather, by showing him to be a man of principle and concern -- digging inside his psyche to understand the beliefs and philosophy that moved him; by getting at the things that drew him and appalled him, and explaining how those things drove his artistry, and his impetus to set down our times, and his, for the judgment of posterity. It's a first-class book about the creative process, about the lows and highs, the writer's block, the fear of failing to communicate, the feeling of being the outcast; the messenger crying out ineffectually to people who might not be listening because they're too figuratively deaf or too far gone. It is about the eternal struggle of the artist to create, not only despite the vicissitudes of a hostile world, but despite the contradictory and self-destructive impulses within himself. After writing *Hell's Angels*, Thompson came to a realization that a writer's voice could not come merely by riding along the thin edge between safety and the unknown, but by taking the plunge over the cliff. It became the core of his art, and his life, for better or worse, for the rest of his days.

This book is a recasting, a remastering and shiny new 180-gram vinyl reissue of Thompson's life that blows the stink off what's come before, and for that it's welcome and tremendously well done.

It's also about, as the title suggests, Thompson's hatred for the fascist strain in American life and its deep permeation into all facets and levels of society and how he, with his pen and political involvement tried -- perhaps naively despite his intelligence -- to do something about it. Thompson's early career spanned the death of John and Robert Kennedy and the downfall of George McGovern -- all men who he believed could reverse or slow the country's progressive rot, as well as the rise of contemporary conservatism with its fascist appeals. Denevi's accounts of Thompson's encounters at the 1964, 1968 and 1972 campaigns and political conventions -- particularly relating to Goldwater's and Nixon's corrosive police-state philosophies -- become themes throughout the book that animated Thompson's anger and his willingness to fight and speak out.

The book is first-rate, and highly recommended.

-kr/eg '19

Kimberly says

This was a good look at HST's career from Kennedy through Nixon. I am not sure the subtitle reflects what

is actually in the book. While it's clear he ended up laser-focused on Nixon after a career established on LBJ, Hell's Angels, Kentucky Derby bourgeois, party bosses, violent police, crooked DAs, and narcotics law enforcement, the subtitle makes it sound like he woke up one day determined to take these on when in reality they kept happening to him, shaping his career and life, and leading to Gonzo journalism. That said, that's not a criticism of this book. I thoroughly enjoyed the journey through the best years of HST's career. And of course I loved the final two chapters, which cover Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas and On The Campaign Trail '72—two of my favorite books ever.

Sarah says

For the HST fan, a 'behind the book' look at HST's best decade of writing. From Nixon to Hell's Angels, Fear and Loathing to Watergate, FK gets to the heart of what drove HST during these stranger-than-fiction years.

M. Sarki says

<https://msarki.tumblr.com/post/176672...>

Dr. Hunter S. Thompson is for some an acquired taste. His outrageous and destructive behavior added a negative to his celebrity that was earned first as an insightful and brave journalist. Drugs and alcohol eventually got the best of him.

...Hunter Thompson was grabbing a drink at the Jerome with some friends when he noticed movement near the entrance; someone he didn't know was walking up to the bar. This stranger was large: over six feet tall weighing at least 250 pounds. He had curly hair, a broad, expressive brow. His eyes were small and pointed?alert. He introduced himself: Oscar Acosta. "I'm the trouble you've been looking for," he added wryly.

Thompson took his politics seriously, and the terror and unrest of the sixties stole from us all some very good men and women. The country was in crisis, and the best of the best were being shot down.

... "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing," Bobby said just before he was assassinated, a quote his brother had attributed to Edmund Burke...

Due to the character flaws of leaders like Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon, Hunter Thompson sought to reveal them for who they were. Many of Thompson's "truths" and observations in print turned out to be revelatory. The future Thompson predicted was also something that led to his own personal demons destroying what was best in him.

...When you vote for president today you're talking about giving a man dictatorial power for four years. I think it might be better to have the real business of the presidency conducted by a City Manager-type, a Prime Minister, somebody who's directly answerable to Congress, rather than a person who moves all his friends into the White House and does whatever he wants for four years. The whole framework of the presidency is getting out of hand, It's come to the point where you almost can't run unless you can cause people to salivate and whip on each other with big sticks. You almost have to be a rock star to get the kind of

fever you need to survive in American politics.

All through the book I kept thinking that if Thompson were here today to witness first hand Donald J. Trump he would definitely kill himself again. I kept saying to myself as I read that it is true that history does repeat itself.

...In the end the tragedy wasn't just about Nixon, at least in the strictest sense; what was really at stake would be much bigger than the current moment. As he's written that summer: "The slow-rising central horror of 'Watergate' is not that it might grind down to the reluctant impeachment of a vengeful thug of a president whose entire political career has been a monument to the same kind of cheap shots and treachery he finally got nailed for, but that we might somehow fail to learn something from it."

The author Timothy Denevi has performed a great service for the good citizens of these United States. Using Hunter S. Thompson as subject, Denevi has adroitly shown the parallels between Nixon and Trump without ever mentioning his name. For those of us who want the truth and are willing to hear it, this book has it in spades. This book is a great and important work.

In May 1974, Republican congressman Charles Wiggins, one of Nixon's staunchest supporters, tried to contextualize the mushrooming Watergate scandal: "These things go in fifty-year cycles," he said, "from Grant to Harding to Nixon."

And now Trump.

Marc says

On the Campaign Trail 72' being my favorite Thompson's book, I really wanted to know more about his politics and this read revealed fascinating details and put his life between 1960 and 1974 in full context.

The 64' republican convention
His trips to South America
How he settled in Colorado
His times in California with the Hells Angel's and the Chicano mouvement
His run for sheriff of Aspen
The Vegas book
The Nixon impeachment hearings

Everything is explained at length

Elle Esse says

Freak Kingdom: Hunter S. Thompson's Manic Ten-Year Crusade Against American Fascism | Timothy Denevi ****/5

There is so much information in this book!

I haven't done a thorough study of Thompson's life and times, but I will be forever grateful that I stumbled upon this book.

Hunter S. Thompson was a man unlike any other. Ahead of his time, Thompson took journalism to a level never before seen. Beginning after Hunter moved his family to California shortly after the Kennedy assassination, Thompson began paving the way for realism in the news.

A worthy read for anyone who is a fan of Thompson or his work.

order a copy >> [afflink - thank you so much] <https://amzn.to/2WpC77E>

Jon Zelazny says

Not sure why this tome is generating so much GoodReads love. Hunter S. Thompson lived an action-packed life and fearlessly wrote about all of it in scorching prose that inspired generations of literary outlaws, so why would you need a collection of bland, academic-sounding summaries of those very same articles and exploits? Every time Denevi included an actual Thompson excerpt, I wanted to chuck this and go back to the original works.

How do I feel about Thompson in general? Well, it's complicated. Ten years ago, I wrestled with it in 2900 words for EightMillionStories.com. That site went dark years ago, so here 'tis again:

WHAT HUNTER S. THOMPSON COULD AND COULDN'T DO
by Jon Zelazny

I came of age in Ronald Reagan's America. My parents were Eisenhower-style Republicans, and we lived in a solidly middle class Republican town, in a cultured, but conservative provincial suburb. My parents were happily married, as were the parents of all my friends. Our white-collar dads came home for dinner every night, most of our moms were homemakers who eventually reentered the workforce. My public schools and our church were full of adults who were all pretty much like my parents.

Were there rebels in our town? It's hard to say. There were teenage hoods, easily identified by their black tee shirts and jean jackets with the logos of heavy metal bands stenciled on the back, but they didn't strike me as thwarted idealists, just kids who weren't into school and liked to party. We also had a scattering of artsy-poet-drama types, musicians, and brainy oddballs, but I can't remember anyone pushing the idea that the authority figures in our lives were human scum who deserved to be subverted and scorned. I certainly had no inclination to rebel against anything or anyone.

Yet I was drawn to a pantheon of ne'er-do-well characters from my favorite movies: Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, and Jack Nicholson in EASY RIDER, Donald Sutherland and Elliot Gould in MASH, Gene Hackman in THE FRENCH CONNECTION, Warren Beatty and Hackman in BONNIE & CLYDE, and Malcolm McDowell in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE. My favorite actor was Jack Nicholson: not the paunchy, middle-aged ham of TERMS OF ENDEARMENT and HEARTBURN, but the smart-ass firecracker of early '70's classics like FIVE EASY PIECES, CARNAL KNOWLEDGE, THE LAST DETAIL, CHINATOWN, and CUCKOO'S NEST.

Unlike my town's metalheads, most of these characters didn't enjoy the luxury of social apartness. They

were adults, stuck in the real world, who had to continually fight like tigers to maintain their dynamic, individualistic personalities against stifling surroundings, and the humorless, uninspiring authority figures who happened to be in charge of Army hospitals, police stations, small town cafes, or mental health facilities. These dramas struck a heavy chord in me: nothing seemed as admirable as the indomitable will of a crazy, funny person trying to live and work on their own terms.

To such a teenage mindset, the ethos of Hunter S. Thompson fit like a glove. I first read *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* when I was sixteen, and was enthralled by the idea of a gainfully employed adult who viewed the world as a grotesque playground run by and predominantly filled with witless, stupid nobodies, and that the Very Hip-- Those Who Clearly Saw What the Deal Was-- were socially bound to judge and condemn the “straight world,” and have a king-hell time while doing it.

Las Vegas had only been published thirteen years before, but the America Thompson feared and loathed seemed like it was from another century, or even another planet. After *Las Vegas*, I quickly devoured Thompson’s other four books, *Hell’s Angels*, *Campaign Trail ’72*, *The Great Shark Hunt*, and *The Curse of Lono*. Collectively, his books became my secret social history of America from 1963 and 1977, a shattering evocation of thoughts and feelings that totally flew in the face of my day-to-day reality. (*Lono* was the only misfire: a gorgeous showcase for illustrator Ralph Steadman, but Thompson’s scattershot text regarding Hawaii was, and remains, almost instantly forgettable.)

I was so enamored, I wrote blatantly Thompson-esque articles for my high school newspaper, writing as though I too were a globetrotting, trouble-prone, hard-partying professional journalist. (I’d love to say I really set my classmates’ hair on fire, but I don’t think anyone actually read them.) And as the Reagan glow waned, Thompson’s vision of The Truth seemed increasingly apropos to current events: I had registered Republican when I turned 18, but within two years, Iran-Contra killed my faith in the party, and I soon resigned.

I was nearly out of college when Thompson’s next book appeared, but sadly, *Generation of Swine* was a rag bag of lesser commentary, and the maestro was irrevocably slipping. Ever the optimist, I was sure he had at least one more masterpiece percolating somewhere, that like the Dylan of ’97, Hunter Thompson too would suddenly burst forth afresh, as intuitive and insightful for a new generation as he’d once been for his own, but he never published anything again that made the slightest impact on me. Only his 2005 suicide and funeral would evoke the pathos, humor, bombast, and social commentary of his best writing.

So it was bittersweet watching Alex Gibney’s new documentary, *GONZO: THE LIFE AND WORK OF DR. HUNTER S. THOMPSON*, which opens with the revelation that Thompson was equally disappointed by the decline of his later work. As one might expect, Gibney provides plenty of celebration of the man’s bad craziness, but there’s a surprising amount of tough criticism: Jann Wenner can only think of three great articles Thompson wrote after 1977, Gary Hart calls his political outlook “childish,” and his first wife obliquely deems his suicide an act of cowardice.

Why did Thompson’s intellect and output burn so brightly for about a decade, then fall into such irrelevance? *GONZO* highlights the paradox that even as Thompson relentlessly pursued fame, his three greatest long-form works—*Hell’s Angels*, *Las Vegas*, and *Campaign Trail ’72*—could only have been written by a non-celebrity. In all three, Thompson presents himself as a Wise Fool offering a guided tour of isolated worlds. He profiles the people, details behavior and social custom, and offers pointed judgments at every turn. Thompson truly embedded himself in these situations, and the people he met to become so used to his presence that they behaved naturally around him. Once he became an infamous public personality however, such infiltration was no longer possible. Thompson summarizes the dilemma when he describes attending a

function with Jimmy Carter during the 1976 presidential campaign, and how embarrassed he was when people were more interested in him than the candidate.

Fame (and its excesses) were certainly reasons Thompson didn't write further social studies to stand with his classic trio, but that doesn't really answer the more important, and strangely unasked question: once comfortably established as an author, why couldn't Thompson evolve from journalism and commentary into literary fiction?

Consider Tom Wolfe, his most notable New Journalism peer: following the stratospheric success of the nonfiction *The Right Stuff*, Wolfe stopped accepting assignments, and settled in for the better part of the eighties to write the epic New York novel he'd been dreaming of for twenty years. The result, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, was a hell of a novel, and a quantum leap from Wolfe's highly regarded journalism. His subsequent novels, *A Man in Full* and *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, while not as strong, are still insightful, technically dazzling, and never less than wholly entertaining.

As a young man, Thompson likewise aspired to be a great American novelist, frequently citing his admiration of heavyweights like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Joseph Conrad. In *GONZO*, someone repeats the anecdote that Thompson once retyped *The Great Gatsby* in order to absorb Fitzgerald's "literary rhythm." When I first heard that years ago, I thought, "Wow, Thompson copied Fitzgerald, and I copied Thompson!" But it isn't really true: while I aped my hero's style and persona, those stories I wrote for my high school paper were my own. It wouldn't have occurred to me to retype *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and at this point in my life, I think the idea that you could learn anything about writing by retyping a famous book is stupid.

A number of people in *GONZO* praise Thompson for his imagination, but the film ultimately revealed the opposite to me: that Hunter S. Thompson's greatest failure as a writer was that he possessed almost no imagination whatsoever.

Retyping Fitzgerald aside, can you think of any other best-selling author whose body of work was assigned articles? (I consider *Las Vegas* one of my favorite novels, but it really wasn't: it too was a magazine assignment.) Thompson's friends and family admit his later books of repackaged old material and letters were put out simply to make money, so where are all the short stories, outlines for novels, and assorted scraps of fiction one would expect to find in the dusty storage bins of any famous writer? How is it possible a man who worshipped Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Conrad didn't leave behind even one short story from his youth? And if didn't write any then, why not later?

Part of the answer can be found in his second novel, *The Rum Diary*, which Thompson completed when he was 22, but only published forty years later. (His first novel remains unpublished.) Both were autobiographical stories, with *The Rum Diary* based on Thompson's experiences as a journalist in Puerto Rico circa '59. It's competent, but uninspired, witless, and dull. Did this early failure forever hobble Thompson's confidence in his abilities? If so, he was a coward and fool. How could he not have understood that great novelists spend years honing their craft? Did he set himself such impossibly high standards for fiction that they became his lifelong excuse for not even trying?

Surveying the breadth of his work today, I'm most struck by Thompson's narrowness. All he was ever able to write about were his own thoughts and feelings, and describe things he had observed firsthand. Yet even as he was drawn to all kinds of human excitement, he clearly lacked the crucial traits of curiosity and empathy a good writer needs to imagine what other people are thinking or feeling. You can feel him trying in some of his sixties articles, and in *Hell's Angels*, but as his gonzo persona began to solidify, his interest and

willingness to wrestle with the beguiling complexities of human relations was rapidly ebbing.

Instead, he just started making up funny shit, then honed his knee jerk assumptions into well crafted, but outrageous fantasies. If he observed people acting in a strange manner, he generally chalked it up to drug use. It's pretty funny in Las Vegas: two guys on an epic drug binge accusing everybody else of being on drugs. It's not quite as funny in Campaign Trail '72 when Thompson claims veteran newsman John Chancellor did acid, or spins a fantasy of troubled Democrat Ed Muskie abusing a drug called ibogaine, a false story that was picked up by other reporters and damaged the candidate's reputation. Why did Thompson make such an obnoxious choice? What kind of person couldn't offer a glimmer of sympathy for a candidate floundering under intense pressure? What the ibogaine story demonstrates to me is Thompson's ever-growing emotional disconnection.

The price his work ultimately paid for this defect was its crushing lack of subtlety. His view of humanity WAS childish: the vast majority of people he encounters are denounced as treacherous greedheads, while occasional exceptions like George McGovern, Muhammad Ali, or Jimmy Carter are venerated as Honest, Decent, Openhearted, and Fair-minded.

No "character" better illustrates Thompson's method of "typecasting" than Richard Nixon. It's generally noted the 37th President held the quintessential master villain role in Thompson's worldview, and once he resigned, Thompson was left without a comparable public figure to focus his contempt on. I too considered Thompson's Nixon articles the most powerful work of his career... until Oliver Stone released his biopic *NIXON* in 1995.

Stone and Thompson are sixties rebels cut from the same cloth (with Stone's *SALVADOR* a better Thompson homage than Terry Gilliam's *FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS*), and one can easily assume Stone harbored tremendously bad feelings about Nixon throughout his life, but the compassion and empathy he mustered as a middle-aged man to tell *NIXON* is nothing short of astounding. Stone depicts a nervous little boy who grows up to be an insecure political animal, and shows how the little things that ate away Nixon's good qualities eventually left a damaged and dangerous man at the helm of the most powerful country in the world. You can debate the film's facts and interpretations, but firebrand Stone's quietest movie ever is a profound and nuanced meditation on the confluence of person, persona, and power. Thompson could only make you fear and loathe a monster, but Stone makes you weep for a man. Is there any doubt which task required the greater imagination?

I also think Thompson had nowhere to go as a writer after Watergate because he had long ago dispensed with the actual ethos of journalism, replacing them solely with his own personality. He had no capacity to create original characters and stories, and lacked the interest or discipline to channel his creative skills into new forms. When collected newspaper editorials began appearing in the nineties, it was immediately apparent his best stories were the ones he physically participated in. As a mere commentator-- watching CNN for cues, issuing barky screeds from his home in rural Colorado-- his thoughts were no more or less interesting and insightful than those offered by hundreds of other career journalists penning opinion columns.

I'd further posit that after his youthful dreams of literary success died, what Hunter Thompson most feared and loathed was writing itself. He sure bitched about it enough, and *GONZO* again offers that photo of him taking a bead at his typewriter with a .44 Magnum. If true, it suggests an arc even more tragic than Nixon's: A failed novelist becomes a journalist because he has no other talents, abilities, or inclinations. He treats his profession with increasing contempt, his work gets sloppier, until, miraculously, his rebelliousness strikes a chord with a generation in turmoil, and thus he achieves a fame beyond his wildest dreams... only his astounding success further cements him to the profession he's long despised. He still can't bring himself to

attempt the kind of writing he once loved, and can't think of anything else to do, so he adopts the persona of a professional party animal... until he gets old, and can't even do that as well as he used to, so he shoots himself in the head.

I used to love hearing what a wild and crazy guy Thompson was, but the more the stories are told in *GONZO*, the less enamored I became. Was he really that much fun to be around? Maybe for a short visit, or if your idea of a great time is to get loaded, talk a lot of shit, and shoot off some guns. Thompson was a hoodlum in the fifties, and probably would've been a metalhead if he grew up in my town thirty years later. I'm pretty sure those guys thought I was a dipshit in high school, so I can't imagine I would have impressed my old literary outlaw icon either. But that's okay. I love action, drama, neurosis, violence, profanity, bad behavior, and outrageous humor—but only in books, movies, music, and my own writing. My actual life is quiet and peaceful, and I wouldn't want it otherwise, or even pretend it was otherwise for the purpose of sustaining a cult of personality, because I've thought a lot about the dichotomy between person and persona, and I think people who confuse the two often end up in a giant stew of psychic trauma.

I owe Hunter S. Thompson immeasurably. His work has been an enduring influence on my own. But his work is still here, right there on my shelf when I need a jolt of inspiration or a good laugh. As for the man himself—who he was, what he did, and how he lived—I really don't give a shit anymore.

Richard Lawrence says

If you are a Hunter S Thompson fan or an aspiring writer you'll want to read this book. Perhaps you are both a Thompson fan and an aspiring writer. If so, this book is mandatory. I could write paragraphs on it but I would take away from the pungency of the narrative and do the reader a disservice. Well worth the time. You'll wish it was twice as long as it is.
