

THROUGH THE GONZO LENS THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON

A new book on the life of Hunter S. Thompson shows us the world as it was seen through the eyes of the founding father of gonzo journalism.

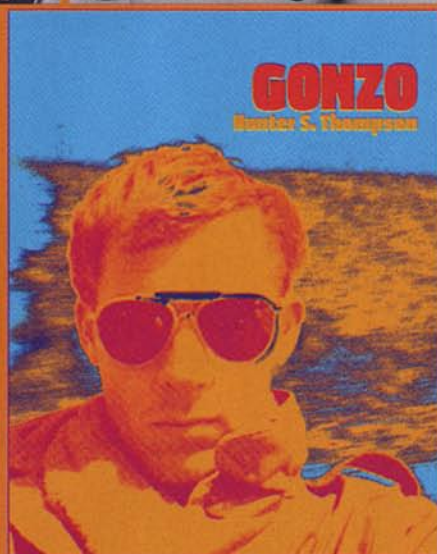
It's been two years since gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson took his own life. His ability to glean truths from chaos—often his own—remains unparalleled, as does his skill for ridiculing the powerful and portraying them as grotesque and farcical caricatures. Tom Wolfe, a brother in the pantheon, called Thompson “the century’s greatest comic writer in the English language.”

A new “visual biography” called *Gonzo* (AMMO Books) has been published in a classy clamshell edition, accompanied by a print, and it’s worth many Chinese promissory notes, but an edition affordable to the proletariat will be available soon. The scrapbook of photographs (mostly taken by Hunter), memorabilia and quotations spans his sprawling life: his discharge from the Air Force; journalism from bohemian New York City and Big Sur to Puerto Rico and Colombia; a hard ride with the Hells Angels that resulted in a beating and an acclaimed first book; a near-successful run for sheriff in Aspen, CO, on the Freak Power ticket; a road trip to Las Vegas that yielded fear and loathing; and, most historically, political

reportage that doggedly pursued the greedy and corrupt. Devotees of his *oeuvre* will be thrilled by the graphic evidence of his legend. As Johnny Depp writes in the introduction: “He lived it, breathed it and celebrated it, all of it.”

Hunter’s observant and sensitive journalist’s eye served him well as a photographer. The composition, lighting and choice of subjects prove him an adept lensman, gifted with empathy for everyday humanity. The collection is also a love letter to the last gasp of a society before it became corporate-branded and shopping-mauled.

The book’s intimacy isn’t surprising, largely because the co-editor (with Steve Crist) is Laila Nabulsi, Hunter’s live-in paramour and fiancée for five years, who also produced the film version of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. “Through the process of going through everything, I was so struck with the sense of purpose and destiny he had about himself early on, despite the odds or no money,” Laila recalls. “He was constantly talking about the death of the American Dream. It was his beat: the values of the American Dream that he grew up with, and then becoming involved with politics and Nixon and Vietnam. The whole era that happened—that revolution. He was its voice, and one of those people for whom



the pen is mightier than the sword.

“I was so concerned with those quotes for the final section,” she continues. “What is he leaving us? What is he saying to us? He was beating this drum every time he could, saying we had to get rid of these Bush guys, we have to get out and vote. And we have to have fun—that’s what they don’t want us to have. They want us to live in fear.”

“He had a purpose. He had a fight. He believed in things. He was a true patriot. He was counterculture, he was an iconoclast, but ultimately a real American.” — Michael Simmons