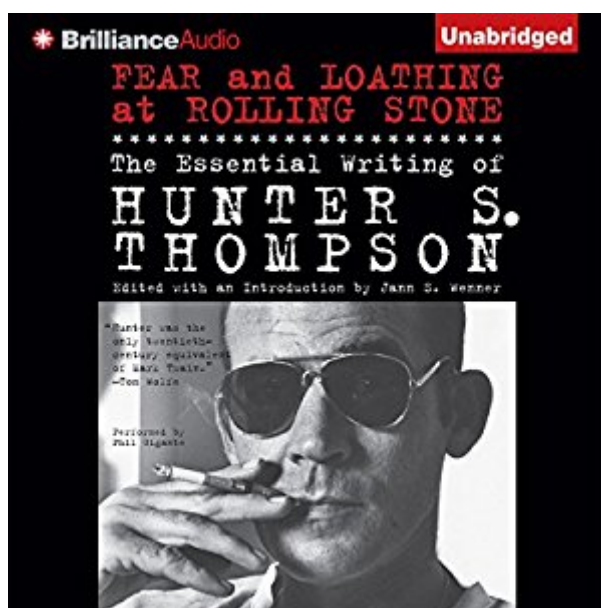


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Fear And Loathing At Rolling Stone: The Essential Writing Of Hunter S. Thompson



Synopsis

"Buy the ticket, take the ride," was a favorite slogan of Hunter S. Thompson, and it pretty much defined both his work and his life. *Fear and Loathing at Rolling Stone* showcases the roller-coaster of a career at the magazine that was his literary home. Jann S. Wenner, the outlaw journalist's friend and editor for nearly thirty-five years, has assembled articles that begin with Thompson's infamous run for sheriff of Aspen on the Freak Party ticket in 1970 and end with his final piece on the Bush-Kerry showdown of 2004. In between is Thompson's remarkable coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign - a miracle of journalism under pressure - and plenty of attention paid to Richard Nixon, his *blatante* noire; encounters with Muhammad Ali, Bill Clinton, and the Super Bowl; and a lengthy excerpt from his acknowledged masterpiece, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Woven throughout is selected correspondence between Wenner and Thompson, most of it never before published. It traces the evolution of a personal and professional relationship that helped redefine modern American journalism, and also presents Thompson through a new prism as he pursued his lifelong obsession: The life and death of the American Dream.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is an utter disgrace. It is far from "The Essential Hunter S. Thompson" as it is heavily edited throughout by Jann Wenner and Paul Scanlon. So what the reader is getting is a chopped and butchered version of Hunter S. Thompson's original articles. We are not even talking about excerpts here, the articles in this collection bear no resemblance to the original writing. For example,

Strange Rumblings in Aztlan has the entire first page chopped out, with this new edited version kicking off in the middle of a paragraph. To mask this Wenner and Scanlon have combined two of Thompson's sentences to start off the article. Yeah you read that correctly, the first sentence is a mutated piece of writing thanks to the hand of the editors. Fear and Loathing at The Super Bowl has pages upon pages cut from the original source, leaving an article that is disjointed and all over the place. The entire collection continues in this fashion with only 2-3 articles remaining untouched. I cannot fathom what Jann Wenner was thinking when he decided to take this approach with Hunter's writing. Thompson would never have tolerated such interference with his work and Wenner knows this only too well. The collection also claims to include letters and memos between the pair but the reality is that you get 50 short letters of little substance, some of which are already published in Fear and Loathing in America. Comparing the two, the reader will also discover that Wenner has edited the letters, as if butchering the articles wasn't enough. So at the end of the day, this book serves no real purpose. All of this work is already freely available in its original form, as Thompson intended, in both The Great Shark Hunt and The Gonzo Papers Anthology. So please avoid this disgraceful publication and purchase either of the above books instead. At least you know you will have the original work and not some piece of quackery from Jann Wenner, who should know better and wouldn't have dared pull such a stunt if Hunter was alive. I'd give this publication 0 out of 5 stars if I would allow me to do so, it is that bad.

This book is a kind of Hunter Thompson "reader." It contains abridged selections from the years of his association with Rolling Stone. At its best, it presents a "highlight package" assembled by Jann Wenner, containing pieces from Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, Thompson's 1972 campaign coverage, Watergate, Fear and Loathing in Elko, correspondence between Wenner and Thompson, and other fragments. As a Thompson fan, of course I always enjoy reading his work. This book, though, by no means substitutes for reading the full length works and full sequences of pieces it is drawn from. If what you're in the mood for is in fact a retrospective cruise through work you're already familiar with, it's enjoyable. If instead you want to read the real Thompson, either for the first time or as a revisiting, then you're better off going to the originals. I do think it's a shame when publishers substitute abridged versions of already relatively short works, encouraging readers to satisfy themselves with less than the real thing. And the real thing is available in individual works. It's hard not to give a higher rating to anything written by Hunter Thompson, but the fault here is not his, but the very conception of the book.

If Hunter was still with us he would have hogtied and butchered the poor fools responsible for the raping of some of his finer work.

I wish had a "No stars - comment" rating option. HST's work is strong enough to make this a 5 star book, especially if the pieces are new to the reader, but it's almost entirely a reprinting of work for which RS undoubtedly holds the copyright, and there's very little new, making it a one or two star for an HST fan. It is a nice collection of some spectacular HST writing, but if you're already a fan, you've probably already read most of it. There is very little new here, as most of it is RS articles re-published. In fact, it feels most of the book is *Fear And Loathing: On The Campaign Trail*; if you've read that, you've read much of this book. Fundamentally, though, this book is troubling for two reasons. One, it is just another bald-faced attempt at wringing more money out of HST's ghost by Mr. Wenner and co -- maybe, maybe if there was any indication in the intro / cover / etc that the profits were being donated to a cause in line with HST's philosophies, that's ok. Otherwise, it's just craven greed. Two, it's another attempt by Mr. Wenner to make himself look better and HST worse... that says a lot when the other guy is, you know, dead. At least, in this version, it's slightly less insulting in its "I'm actually a good guy!" and "HST was a terrible person!" character-assassination efforts, or at least it's not as aggressive in them. I can't shake the feeling that Mr. Wenner is either in denial of, ignorant of, or upset by the notion that HST is a main (the only?) reason RS ever became what it was, instead of just another local-rag newsletter rotting in a pile by the door of Rasputin Records, and his books are an effort to deal with it... and result in an unpleasant experience for the HST-fan reader. In this case, specifically, the "see! He slid over time! See! His new stuff (that I chose) is so much better than his later stuff (that I chose, from a collection of work that was written for a magazine he believed royally mistreated him)!" is particularly contrived. If you're a big fan of HST's work, unless you enjoy feeling stabby, skip this one. Reading it now, though, does leave two take-away messages: "The more things change, the more they stay the same." I could pull quotes from the campaign-coverage material and publish it today, word for word, about current political events. And, thanks to the inclusion of a few letters by Mr. Wenner, the difference in skill between a hack/non-writer and a true genius with language is -abundantly- clear. I imagine Mr. Wenner included the letters he did to make himself feel better and/or attempt to put himself in a good light, but the jarring difference in authorial skill drives home how talented the good Doctor was, like including Salieri's music on the *Amadeus* soundtrack: "Wait, this is bland and unremarkable... [checks CD case] oh, it's Salieri." So, there's at least that of "new material value," I guess. Unless you've read -everything- else, the few new letters here aren't worth it. If you've only

read Fear and Loathing and are looking for more material, this is a reasonable "best of," but consider looking elsewhere.

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