

*Do you think the film will do justice to Thompson's unique, 'Gonzo' style of journalism?*

I do. Johnny Depp, who plays the young Hunter in 1959, as you probably already know, discovered the manuscript while sleeping in Hunter's basement researching *F & L*. He and Hunter read it aloud and were so moved by it, so they made a pact to make it a movie someday. Soon after, it was published as "The Long Lost Novel" or something like that. Then, of course, Depp made *F & L* and throughout the production became even closer to Hunter. He became as dear a friend as Hunter had outside his Woody Creek circle in his last years. He cared very much for him personally, but also his legacy. It came full circle after Hunter's death when Depp picked up the tab for his strange funeral, which I was involved in raising money for with the good people at Flying Dog.

This all leads in a long answer to what I think is prophetic and poetic; Depp working so hard to get *Rum Diary* made, and starring one last time as Hunter. In that sense Depp and the crew, who all felt Hunter's presence throughout its making, I think, did him and the work justice. I have not seen it yet. I will this Friday and I can tell you then if I think it was true to the book. It has been some time since I read it. I know Hunter was proud of it and his time trying to be a young novelist. He told me so himself.

Although I would say that *Rum Diary* as a novel is not Gonzo. It does show glimpses, but it was the younger HST's attempt at a geographic or social experiment, a fish out of water and a slice of life abroad in uncharted territories that would soon be exploited by American commercialism. Again, there are traces of what Hunter would eventually hit on in his "Kentucky Derby" and then *Hell's Angels* work, but I would not and I believe Hunter did not see it eventually, as a pure Gonzo experiment.

*Do you think there is a danger that it could act as sort of sequel to Fear and Loathing in which Thompson was portrayed as alcohol and drug-fuelled?*

Not the same ballpark as *F & L*, which for me, and again, in my time speaking with Hunter and many of his colleagues and contemporaries, comes on as a counterculture screed, a satire of overindulgence and a mockery of drugs, money and the entire absurdity of American culture, but mostly the worship of escape. In a way, *Rum Diary* speaks of escape, and it does mock the idea of trying to flee greed, doldrums and middle class trappings, but is more a journal of wasted youth and misguided faith than free-form Gonzo.

But there is always a chance it will be taken that way. Hell, it is being promoted that way by the studio. Recently saw the trailer and it comes off as a goofy party film, but to be fair, it is an unhinged story.

*What do you think Thompson's comments would be regarding the release of this Blockbuster film, would he see it as a valid representation of his work or simply a commercially viable project?*

Hunter always said, "It isn't art unless it is sold." Hunter believed in the buck. Starving for his work was never his style. If you read his collective letters, I would not be surprised if half, and I do mean half, were bitching about someone who owed him or

stuffed him on money, and the other half is bitching about not having enough money. So I think he would see it as valid if it were commercially viable.

*What are your general thoughts or feelings about the release of the film?*

I have been waiting for this long before they green-lit it and then after they shot it, what is it now, two, three years ago? So I'm very excited. I am glad Hunter's work will be exposed to a new audience, another generation, like the *F & L* film did for the other work. Hunter was a pop culture icon and his work will live on as a glimpse of extreme American behavior and wit, much like Mark Twain before him. I hope it's a worthy film and captures the spirit of what Hunter wanted to capture when he wandered into Puerto Rico looking for meager work in the late-fifties and found a kind of desperate wasteland in paradise, not unlike his hero (and mine) F. Scott Fitzgerald in his masterpiece of wasted American faith, *The Great Gatsby*.