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## On Tour



LOBBRAINE BOSWELL

### Hunter S. Thompson, UC Davis

Dr. Hunter S. Thompson, father of gonzo journalism and self-proclaimed raving freak in his own time, sparred with the witty and idolatrous among 300 wildly enthusiastic aggies who packed UC Davis' Freeborn Hall.

Running the gamut of trendy issues (from his role in electing Jimmy Carter president to his opinion of reality), the good doctor expanded on his books (*Hell's Angels*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*) and delivered a brief diatribe against cartoonist G. B. Trudeau and his *Doonesbury* comic strip, in which a character remarkably like Thompson appears regularly. "I've never met the bastard," the Gonz said of Trudeau. "First time I do I intend to light him on fire. That may sound weird, but the first time I met Hamilton Jordan, I lit him on fire... it's easy."

More highlights:

Thompson: I'm not exactly sure what we're going to talk about... I've always tried to make it clear to everybody involved in this thing that I have nothing to say, nothing to sell, and I can't imagine why anybody would pay... But what I can do is argue with you.

(Thompson received \$2200 for his appearance, one of many this past year; these appearances may be his only source of income, since his relationship with *Rolling Stone* editor Jann Wenner cooled.)

Question: Do you suppose that people on other planets are into drugs?

T: If there's intelligent life, yes, I would think so. They probably have better dope than we do.

Q: What happened to the Brown Buffalo (Oscar Acosta, lawyer, author and fellow Gonzo)?

T: All the evidence suggests that he is no longer with us. However, I've never been a great believer in evidence and would bet even money that he is still with us, in some form. I don't like to blow my friends' covers, so as far as I'm concerned, he's dead. Until he tells me differently.

Q: What was the greatest rush you ever had?

T: I would say, just right off the top of my head... and in partial response to the gentleman here who wanted to know the meaning of life... going down Highway 1, at night, wearing nothing but a pair of shorts and a T shirt, with the lights out, 120 miles an hour... is about as high as you can get.

At one point someone in the audience stood up and said "I want to compliment you on being so coherent." We'd all heard reports that Thompson tends to leave his body on occasion, but this evening he was

on top of everything — full of drugs (he imbibed nitrous oxide, ether, freon gas and whisky before and during his "lecture") but handling them well.

Thompson didn't always wait for questions, but his random soliloquies were pertinent and pithy:

"What I was counting on with Carter was his egomania guaranteeing sort of a minimum performance level. I thought he would be ashamed to fail, whereas Nixon gloried in it.

"If there is any central characteristic of Gonzo Journalism it is participation in the story. And when you're backing off and talking about it, you're not participating in any way. You're touching it. So that almost precludes the gonzo approach. Unless of course you want to play with the Rolling Stones... I could play drums with the Stones, and then write a review of the album. That'd be gonzo all the way. But the participation factor is major, and primary.

"New Journalism, whatever that means... is people trying to break out of this wretched mold. The stupid relaying of alleged facts. New journalism is a better form of what journalism should have been all along. Reporting the truth, or somehow trying to get at the truth."

Q: Do you have a role, a cultural role, to uphold in your work?

T: Well, it worries me that you'd ask that question, but... no. If I worried about that I'd go totally crazy.

Joel Patterson

### Lou Reed, Old Waldorf, San Francisco

When they called Lou Reed's seamy brand of New York underground rock — songs about drug addiction, violence and kinky sex — "depraved" and "demonic," you could almost imagine him crouched below manhole covers on a dark night, trading lyrics with the devils beneath the pavement. He was street-tough and defiant, a kind of urban James Dean, singing — first with Andy Warhol's Velvet Underground and later alone — with a rough, sometimes passionate swagger. His music was raw city-rock, and it grated like the growl of a garbage truck at four AM.

His fans in San Francisco — who made all eight shows at the Old Waldorf sellouts — found him true to form when he played there last month. After the commercial success of a hit single ("Walk on the Wild Side") a few years back and the addition of a seven-piece backup band, including a saxophonist and two female vocalists, Reed is still rough and raunchy. On opening night the audience gave him a rousing welcome, and kept their enthusiasm throughout the set.

They were a cleaner, more respectable looking crowd than you'd expect for the man some call "the odd father of punk," which might have had as much to do with the high (\$9.50) ticket price as with changing styles. The leather and heavy makeup boys were absent, and nary a safety pin was seen.

Reed avoided much of his older material, working chiefly from his newest album *Street Hassle*, and aside from an occasional shout for Velvet Underground's classic "Heroin," the audience seemed content.

Opening for Reed was England's Ian Drury, an inventive and irreverent singer/songwriter whose music is several cuts above the usual bawdy punk-rock material. He used cockney slang, clever wordplays and driving rhythms to keep his five-piece band rumbly along.

Jayson Q. Wechter