

Bedtime for Gonzos: Cheap scotch nightcap with the good doctor

by Ken Burke

It's not hard to get a fix on Hunter S. Thompson. Judging from his March 22 stop-over at Dalhousie for a high-priced speaking engagement, Doctor Gonzo exists indeed, although in decidedly human form. As one person said after the event, "He's so American it's scary."

If it had begun any other way, it just wouldn't have made sense. One week after postponing his speaking engagement at Dalhousie because of a missed *Rolling Stone* deadline, Hunter S. Thompson kept a near-capacity McInnes Room crowd waiting for 45 minutes before wandering onstage to answer questions. For many, the wait was the true climax of the evening - the most contact they were to have with the Hunter S. Thompson myth.

Thompson was in surprisingly pliant spirits during much of the two hour long question-and-answer session in the SUB, possibly because he had been plied with spirits all day before the event. Earlier in the day, a "press conference" at a Halifax tavern where he was scheduled to be interviewed by four Halifax journalists had degenerated into a free-for-all bull session with the 40 or so patrons of the tavern at the time. Such as it was, the conference only occurred after Thompson calmed down from initial panic over the interview, with the help of several Bloody Mary's, seafood dinners, and the incessant new friendship of the tavern people.

Before Thompson arrived, the crowd was primed for a head-on meeting with a myth. Although it's doubtful whether a third of the crowd had ever read anything the "good doctor" had written, there was a high level of expectancy running through the McInnes Room. Stories of his never having arrived in Halifax, his being on a super drug binge, and being in a Halifax

jail on undertermined charges circulated freely, and for good reason. They weren't there to see a man - they were after a cultural icon.

As he strode onstage in a grey tweed jacket, plain blue shirt, beige slacks, and traditional sunglasses, baseball cap, cigarette-in-filter, and icebucket with "cheap scotch", Thompson was exactly what the crowd had paid \$5-\$7 to see. Tall and in seemingly great shape, Thompson looks like your uncle who spends a few weeks hunting in Cape Breton every year. His head bald in the front and centre, he talks in a low monotone that often passes for (and is) a mumble. He is a man waiting for something to jar him into action.

After some initial disappointment that there was to be no speech, and the ejection of two front-row geeks hollering insults and "This is the 80's, not the 60's!" at Thompson, the questions and answers began flying about for real.

Answering shouted questions as readily as "official" questions from the floor mike, Dr. Thompson was beset with hordes of often inane and embarrassingly stupid questions (sample: Do you have a library card? Would you go drinking with me? What do you find attractive in a woman?) which he handled as best as anyone could.

Keeping most people amused, Thompson spoke in almost-stock Thompsonesque phrases about almost any and every topic, such as:

- the decline of drugs - "The problem with doing drugs is that there isn't anyone good to do 'em with anymore. It isn't the drugs, it's the people."

- Ronald Reagan - "The man is a bull-headed fool. He's a salesman; he used to sell light bulbs for GE, and that's all he is now. If he's elected again, it's from a national death wish. At least Nixon was his



Jordan/Dal Photo

The Great Gonzo himself, Hunter S. Thompson, graced Dalhousie with his presence for a lecture which, incredibly, probably broke even. So what if we are "the doomed generation," Hunter?

own source of evil."

- Reagan's Administration - "They're a bunch of thieves. They're trying to sell off a generation - the national parks, the national coastline, everything..."

- Doonesbury and "Uncle Duke" - "It's a relief he's taking the year off - It's a burden to go to Waco, Texas or Perth, Australia, and be recognized as a cartoon character. He had to cut me down to his size, though." (Garry Trudeau is 5'2", where Thompson is a foot taller; Duke is short)

- Pierre Trudeau - "I like Trudeau; he seems to me to have decent instincts and he seems to come from the right places."

- The United States of America - "I think the USA's the most danger-

ous country in the world."

- Halifax - "When I heard about this place, I thought it was like the Falklands. I thought I'd be speaking to a bunch of shepherds."

- The Greens (new West German anti-nuke political party) - "I'm amazed at the effect they've had, but they're speaking for a country that's smack in the middle of any minimal war. Not only do I think they're right, but I'd vote for them."

- The American Dream - "I'm embarrassed by the American Dream - now it's just getting on T.V. or the cover of *People* magazine."

- The Fear - "Your next real worry is who gets the Democratic nomination, because they will be the next President of the U.S. Unless

Reagan starts a war. I think he'd prefer a war in the Caribbean to losing an election - they want Cuba and will use any excuse to get it."

Thompson also said he wanted to give up his *Rolling Stone* writing for novels exclusively. "It's what I started off in," he said. His new book, "The Silk Road", about the Cuban freedom flotilla, is his hoped-for start on this stage of his career - although the book isn't complete yet.

Ironically, in one of his last questions, he was asked about Timothy Leary's whereabouts. "He's on the lecture circuit," replied Doctor Gonzo. "Leary and G. Gordon Liddy - you wonder how far we've gone between the 60's and the 80's."

It does make you wonder.

Eclectical musical collectives

by KimRilda van Feggelen

music lovers can expect a treat this Wednesday, March 30, as John Gray presents an alternative music concert at the Sir James Dunn Theatre. The evening plans to be a combination of both classical and new sounds provided by three "musical collectives."

John S. Gray is known in Halifax for his work with the Dalhousie experimental music group *Murphy's Law* and has performed solo concerts at St. Mary's University and in Ontario, where he presently makes his home.

Gray's music is a merging of his grand piano and the electric. This

Wednesday he will perform an improvisation piece using electronic keyboards, sequencers and tape loops as a backdrop for the rich sounds of a nine-foot Bechstein concert grand - a piano which Gray adores. The piece will also be accompanied by computer-generated animation by Floyd L. Gillis, whose previous work with Gray won him an award for the film "Perspectives."

Next on the agenda is Halifax group PBX. Formed in 1981, PBX has performed several times in the city. The current lineup has two new members, Clancy Dennehy and Bill Duggan while founding

member David Barteaux has opted for a solo performance (Barteaux will play one of his own piano compositions). PBX utilizes piano, guitars, winds, percussion and tape effects in an experimental mode.

The third part of the evening will be a performance of Nerve Music presented by local synth/bass player Phollop Willing, P.A. The Nerve have given numerous performances in Halifax since forming in 1983 and has been described as a "somewhat alien third cousin to electronic pop music of the 80's."

Tickets for this extravaganza are available at the Dal Box Office in the Arts Centre.



Hunter S. Thompson

The Myth...