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Death stirs 'gonzo' sales

By Patti Thorn, Rocky Mountain News
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Hunter S. Thompson's death this week had many second-guessing why the author took his own life. Was it the natural outcome of Thompson's crazed, "gonzo" lifestyle? Or a freak moment from which there was no return?

Sobering questions - with no answers. No wonder, then, that while some pondered Thompson's demise, others celebrated his life in less somber ways: by returning to his high-octane, often-hilarious books.

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Bookstores reported a surge in Thompson sales immediately after the news.

"People are coming in and buying his books," said Cathy Langer of the Tattered Cover. "It's definitely created a renewed interest."

Thompson's books were also seeing a spike in sales on Amazon.com.

The day after his death, for example, Thompson's 2004 *Hey Rube: Blood Sport, the Bush Doctrine, and the Downward Spiral of Dumbness - Modern History from the Sports Desk*, ranked No. 1 on the site's "Literature and Fiction" list (no explanation, though, on why the collection of essays wasn't classified as "nonfiction"). *Fear*



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With 32 hours to go, the bidding for this 1971 first edition of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was up to \$810 on eBay Wednesday. Stores have reported a surge in the sales of his books since his death.

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and Loathing in Las Vegas ranked No. 5 on the nonfiction list, trailed by *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail* at No. 13.

While some were snapping up his books, others were surfing the Net for collectibles.

According to online rare-books seller Abebooks.com, *Thompson* was the most popular search term on its site Monday, the day after Thompson's death.

"Book collectors have been searching through Thompson's unique gonzo legacy, which includes bullet-ridden memorabilia and book inscriptions such as 'Screw You Suckfish,' " a press release said.

The site offered such curiosities as a volume of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, shot with a bullet hole and signed and dated by Thompson (going for \$750).

Or, for those looking for something more arcane, a copy of *Red Shark*, by Thompson's longtime illustrator Ralph Steadman about the gonzo journalist, signed by Kurt Vonnegut. "Hunter is as crazy as a bedbug," Vonnegut wrote.

In the wake of Thompson's suicide, that lighthearted line has suddenly taken on a more ominous cast - not to mention a hefty pricetag. Six-hundred dollars buys that eerie epitaph.

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