

# Basic Detail Report

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## Hunter S. Thompson's 1973 Chevrolet Caprice Convertible

### Date

1973

### Primary Maker

Hunter S. Thompson

### Medium

Metal; Plastic; Leather; Rubber

### Description

1973 Chevrolet Caprice convertible, in cherry red with 454 V-8 engine. The Red Shark was memorialized in Thompson's seminal book, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and featured in the 1998 film of the same name. In 1991, friends of Thompson presented him with the red 1973 Chevrolet Caprice intending it to be his own personal version of the Red Shark he referenced in the book. (The car referenced in the book was a rental car, not owned by Thompson.) It was Thompson's personal car that appeared in not only the 1998 film adaptation of the book, but also on the covers of two subsequent Thompson books, *Better Than Sex: Confessions of a Political Junkie*, (1994) and *Hey Rube: Blood Sport, the Bush Doctrine*. Adventures in this car have been chronicled by Thompson in his memoir, *Kingdom of Fear* and various ESPN articles and letters. Johnny Depp, Ralph Steadman, Walter Isaacson, Bill Murray and other good friends have also chronicled adventures in the Red Shark. Hunter S. Thompson (1937-2005) was an American journalist and author known for creating the "Gonzo" journalism genre, where the lines between fiction and nonfiction are blurred and the writer is a participant and critical figure in the events being reported. Thompson began his journalism career at a young age and traveled throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and South America working as a freelance journalist. Thompson's 1966 story about the Hells Angel motorcycle club, which he adapted into a 1967 novel *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs*, was his first widely successful work and told of his time living amongst the group's chapters in San Francisco and Oakland, California. In 1971, Thompson wrote a serialized article for Rolling Stone on his experiences with Mexican-American activist and attorney Oscar Zeta Acosta while in Las Vegas, and was later published as the novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Continuing to hone his first-person Gonzo journalism style, Thompson wrote of himself (as Raoul Duke) and Dr. Gonzo (Acosta) searching for the American Dream in Las Vegas while exploring themes such as drug use and the 1960s counterculture movement. In 1972, he was hired by Rolling Stone to cover that year's presidential election, which led to the publishing of *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* first as a serialized set of Rolling Stone articles and later as a 1973 novel. Thompson's Gonzo persona became part of his real life personality, where he often credited his use of alcohol and illicit drugs as the key to his creativity. He earned a cult following later in life as his works were adapted into major

motion pictures. The 1998 film adaptation of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* starred Johnny Depp as Raoul Duke and Benicio del Toro as Dr. Gonzo, helping to further Thompson's cultural mystique. Thompson lived out his later years at Owl Farm, his home outside of Aspen, Colorado. He published infrequently until 2000, when he wrote a weekly sports column for ESPN until his death. Thompson died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at Owl Farm on February 20, 2005.