

# Lone Star Film Fest movie preview: *One Fast Move or I'm Gone: Kerouac's Big Sur*

*"It's like a goofy holy man's journey."*

BY JOHN P. MEYER

Funny that our content partner Steve-O (of **West and Clear**) picked out both *Let the Right One In* and *One Fast Move or I'm Gone* as two of the films he's aiming to catch at the **Lone Star International Film Festival** - because those were the two that first attracted my attention.

I recently looked at *One Fast Move* on a screener, and I can tell you that it's a compelling - if occasionally a tad precious and insidery - dramatized accounting of Jack Kerouac's experiences while writing his disturbingly personal, semi-fictionalized memoir, *Big Sur*. As one of the dozens of literati interviewees (**Saroyan**, I think) describes it, the experience of reading it is similar to watching ants eat a man.

By this time in his life and career (1960), Kerouac was riding (and being ridden by) the wave of attention and acclaim that launched him to overnight super-stardom following the publication of *On the Road*. In the couple of years leading up to the events chronicled in *Big Sur*, he was declared to be God's Gift to the contemporary literary scene and hailed as the King of the Beats. (No one, we learn, actually used the term "beatnik" at the time.)

Prior to journeying by rail to meet up with his friend **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** on the West Coast, the post-*On the Road* Jack was hounded by everyone he came into contact with. According to girlfriend Joyce Johnson, "men wanted to fight him; women wanted to fuck him." Some of the latter group would even approach Joyce to beg permission.

Burdened by alcoholism and - to hear his acquaintances and biographers describe it - Catholicism-induced guilt, Jack sought the uncertain sanctuary offered by the solitude of Ferlinghetti's remote coastal cabin. But things don't go quite as planned, starting off with his very first introduction to the place: he takes a cab from San Fran all the way to **Bixby Canyon**, arriving there after dark and with the coastal fog firmly entrenched. Using a penlight, Kerouac stumbles his way down to the bottom of the defile, where he ends up sleeping rough; it's only by dawn's early light that he realizes how treacherous his rambling descent had been.

But any physical dangers associated with the Ferlinghetti cabin-in-the-woods pale by comparison to the psychic ones Jack discovers there. While the outpost initially fosters a thorough drying out - along with a spell of poetic seashore writing - he eventually comes to feel repelled by the waves and returns to the city. And to chronic drunkenness.

Nevertheless (and as all interviewees agree), it's due in no small part to Kerouac's internal demons that his writing packs such power - leading Tom Wait to comment that, in today's world, a guy like Jack would get put on Ritalin and we've never hear a peep out of him again.

Along with reenactments and on-camera interviews with Jack's contemporaries, filmmaker Curt Worden's 98-minute story is also told through readings of passages from the book by modern Kerouac adherents (San Shepard, Tom Waits, Donal Logue, Dar Williams... the list goes on). And - as Steve-O notes - the film is scored with music provided by Jay Farrar, along with Benjamin Gibbard (of Death Cab for Cutie).