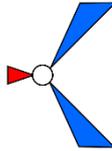


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bncdoc.id	AP0
bncdoc.author	Parker, John
bncdoc.year	1991
bncdoc.title	The joker's wild: biography of Jack Nicholson.
bncdoc.info	The joker's wild: biography of Jack Nicholson. Sample containing about 37647 words from a book (domain: arts)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_biography

<357/c>	Christian name, whoever they were. Why not? Everyone else did. And when he saw producer Joe Pasternak, the renowned MGM star-maker, approaching him in the corridor one day, Nicholson spoke up: 'Hiya, Joe. What about giving me a film test?' Pasternak was apparently impressed; far lesser actors than Nicholson would eventually become began their careers by similar bravado, and he arranged for him to be tested. In earlier days, even that formality might not have been necessary for a contract. Nicholson dreamed for a day or two. Then Pasternak's office called him and told him that he had flunked the test. He was not without talent, though, said Joe, and he advised him to join a local theatre group to get some experience now that the studio training scheme had been abolished. Other things were happening in Hollywood that affected Nicholson, both in his outlook to the film business and to life itself. He had become interested in the culture of the place as he ventured out and made new friends, youngsters in the industry who talked nothing else but films and stars, and was suddenly struck with the notion that he might become an actor. There was much talk in the coffee shops about the new film James Dean was working on, called Rebel Without a Cause; Brando was stunning everyone with his performance in On the Waterfront. Talk was intense among the youngsters, and the young actors and actresses roaming Sunset Strip were no different to the youth of America, if not the world, in that they too were a disoriented bunch in search of idols; Clift, Brando and Dean were providing them with a whole new repertoire of sayings, postures, stances and gestures. They were also rejecting the Great American Dream that had gripped their post-war acquisitive parents, who were stocking their homes with every electric device provided in the Fifties consumer boom. And what else? Rumour had it that if you went to a Norman Mailer party, you'd see people smoking marijuana, covertly passing around a joint behind the bushes at the bottom of the garden. Well, that's nothing, said the jungle telegraph; Jimmy Dean was smoking dope heavily and seemingly without fear of arrest. It was new. Only jazz musicians had smoked marijuana before, and everyone was astounded about Dean because open use of drugs was virtually unknown and still carried heavy penalties; regular offenders were sent to prison and any public knowledge of even marijuana usage brought furore in the headlines, as Robert Mitchum discovered. Down on Sunset Strip, some weird friends of Dean cashed in on his death and began holding court, relating
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>Footprint of the Jimmy they knew</p>
	<p>. Nicholson was now venturing into the haunts of the hopefuls and joined in. Everyone was into existentialism, along with the beginnings of meditation, Zen and some other odd philosophies practised and preached by one of Dean's advisers, a male witch named Samson DeVreer, who was often in company of another of Dean's odd acquaintances, the television hostess named Vampira, because she</p>

looked like one, of whom [Dean](#) once said - when asked by Hedda Hopper if [he](#) was seeing her - 'I don't date cartoons.' In a way they were the leftovers of the [James Dean](#) set, but a new pseudo culture was growing, and Nicholson became part of it, wearing the uniform of round-necked sweaters and jeans or corduroys. DeVreer typified the kind of Los Angeles thinking at the time among the youngsters who listened to his vitriolic demolition of the Californian life. These grass-smoking disciples flocked to his open house like moths to hear him reciting his life story, or his predictions with the tarot cards, or discussing Camus, or analysing Jean-Paul Sartre . They were exotic, impoverished days for Nicholson and, above all, big experiences for the boy from Neptune who had by now left the protective custody of his sister/mother and was sharing an apartment with one of a group of friends who he met at the time and with whom he remained close when he became well known. It is a characteristic of Nicholson that he displays and hopes for loyalty from a friendship and thus most of those he met and formed relationships with in the late Fifties and early Sixties were still in his life at the turn of the Nineties. Several of them went to an acting class run by Jeff Corey, where other aspirants included James Coburn. Corey was not especially impressed by Nicholson's acting. He said it lacked poetry. Nicholson responded that perhaps Corey had n't seen the poetry he was showing him. They were gathering on the Strip, in the coffee houses like the Unicorn, Mac's, Luan's and the Renaissance. When they had no work, Which was often, they'd spend all afternoon sitting over one coffee or one coke trying to write plays. Other new faces were arriving. Steve McQueen had followed Dean west from New York after three or four years of casting-call line-ups. Paul Newman had just secured his first major film role, with Pier Angeli in The Silver Chalice (which was so bad that when it was shown on television in the Sixties, he took out newspaper advertisements apologising to viewers for having to watch it). Dennis Hopper, then a mere passing acquaintance of Nicholson's had, in comparison, made