



Jack's Life: A Biography of Jack Nicholson

By Patrick McGilligan

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"Volatile Jack Nicholson has found the perfect biographer in Patrick McGilligan, who gives us a rich, absorbing portrait of one of the greatest movie stars ever." ?Patricia Bosworth

No male American film star of the post-Brando era has demonstrated the talent, the charisma, the larger-than-life audacity, and the string of screen triumphs of Jack Nicholson. In *Jack's Life*, Patrick McGilligan, one of our finest film historians, has produced the definitive biography of this most private and public of stars, from his tangled Dickensian upbringing in New Jersey, his formative years as an actor and screenwriter, his near-accidental breakthrough to stardom in *Easy Rider*, and his string of great roles in *Chinatown*, *Five Easy Pieces*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Last Detail*, *The Shining*, and other films that mark him as a searching, complex artist. Here as well is the often Rabelaisian life behind the smiling mask, the legendary romances and appetites for sex and drugs, the obsessions with money and control, and the perpetual restlessness.

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Jack's Life: A Biography of Jack Nicholson By Patrick McGilligan Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Born in New York City in 1937, Nicholson grew up in New Jersey under the "elaborate charade" that his grandmother was his mother and his mother was his sister--a fact that was not revealed to him until 1974. After moving to California he studied acting and found work in forgettable Roger Corman films and television. His big break came in 1969 when Bruce Dern turned down the role of George Hanson, a Southern lawyer in *Easy Rider*. Nicholson was cast in the part and the film became the counterculture hit of the year. There soon followed such films as *Five Easy Pieces*, *Carnal Knowledge*, *Chinatown* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, for which he won an Academy Award. The author goes into seemingly every facet of Nicholson's life: the drugs (you name it, he's used it); his preoccupation with sex, which has kept him bedding the likes of Michelle Phillips, Anjelica Huston and Margaret Trudeau. There is plenty of behind-the-scenes material on the making of each Nicholson movie and insights into his characterizations. McGilligan (George Cukor) has captured Nicholson's intensity in this fact-filled biography, which will be especially appreciated by Nicholson's fans. Photos. Author tour.

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From Library Journal

McGilligan, who already has a well-regarded biography of George Cukor to his credit (*George Cukor: A Double Life*, LJ 10/15/91), turns his eye to Nicholson in this first-rate biography of a complex character. Heavily researched and well written, this is an insightful and perceptive examination of Nicholson's life and art. Thankfully, McGilligan spares the reader any attempt at titillation, though he does raise some questions over the actual identity of Nicholson's biological father. The author concentrates on studying the circumstances and character of Nicholson. The volume includes an excellent filmography, and publication is timed to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the film *Easy Rider* and the actor's 40th year in show business. This will probably rank among the best film biographies of the year. Highly recommended for public and academic libraries.

- Marianne Cawley, *Kingwood Branch Lib., Tex.*

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From [Booklist](#)

This unauthorized biography of one of the most compelling actors of our generation digs deep, especially given the fact many of Jack's confidantes wouldn't speak to the biographer. Nicholson's early life, shrouded in mystery (his teenaged mother gave young Jack to her mother to raise, and nobody ever told him) parallels in some ways the secretive plots of such Nicholson films as *Chinatown*, and his manic experiences with drug use in the 1960s and 1970s is reflected in his no-holds-barred Oscar-winning performance in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Following the tumultuous childhood years, McGilligan spends much time delving into Jack's formative acting years in the 1960s, when he made several low-budget films before breaking into stardom in *Easy Rider* and *Five Easy Pieces*. We meet many of Jack's film contemporaries, such as directors Bob Rafelson, John Huston, and Roman Polanski (Polanski's notorious arrest at Jack's house is chronicled here); wives and lovers such as Sandra Knight, Anjelica Huston, and current flame Rebecca Broussard; and various friends and hangers-on, but rarely do we get insights into other film actors because of Nicholson's domination in films (a notable exception is his supporting role in *Terms of Endearment*.) In all, *Jack's Life* is one of the most complete and enjoyable film biographies ever of a still-living actor. *Joe Collins*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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