

SHORT LIVES, BIG ACHIEVEMENTS

James Dean

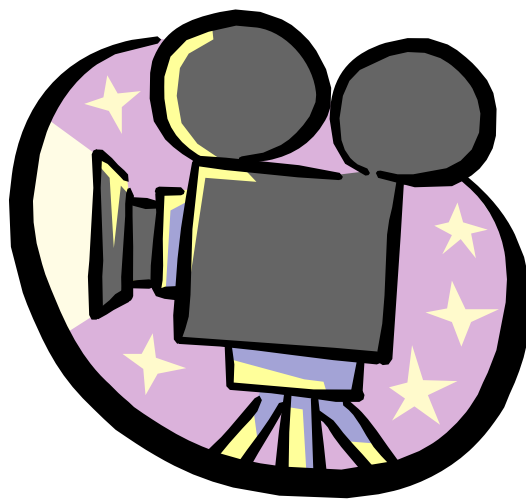
8th February 1931-30th September 1955



I remember the first time that I saw James Dean in the 1950's film, Rebel Without A Cause. I thought to myself, wow this man has a lot of angst about something and how the angst seemed to be tearing at his innards. I was transfixed. For, I too was at the time in my teens and could feel some of the anger emanating from the screen. I suppose that I, like many teenagers in the 1950's, could identify with the character "Jim" that was being played. James Dean dies within a month of the film being released in New York at the 'prime' age of 24. In his short life he starred in three films, in total and was nominated for two Academy awards for the films East of Eden and Giant. All three films were produced within little over a year. When I saw the film Rebel Without A Cause I questioned whether the turmoil being felt by the

character Jim was part of the turmoil inside James Dean, or whether James Dean was such a great actor that he was so able to portray the character Jim's predicament. He was clearly fantastically gifted at acting.

James Dean was born in Indiana and moved to Los Angeles at 5 years of age with his family. He was later cared for on a farm by his Aunt and Uncle in Indiana after the death of his mother. Later, he returned to California where he attended college. After gaining acting experience from an acting workshop and some small acting parts, he also appeared on Broadway in TV dramas and commercials.



He moved to Hollywood on appointment of his starring role in Rebel Without A Cause. He was also a keen motorcar racer and had a passion for fast cars. Some say that this passion for fast cars is what stopped his career short, as he died in a car accident on 30 September 1955.

Although his life was short, I think his achievement in such a relatively short space of time is testament to what can be achieved when people are passionate; and despite the tragic risk of his pastime of motorcar racing, he seemed to me to live as if every moment was important and I feel is what contributed to his success. I suppose the question is does one live life cautiously and achieve less or does one say 'when my time is up, it's up', and there's nothing I can do to change that impending 'deadline' and live a fuller life by taking more risks.

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