



Miklos Rozsa

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THE LOST WEEKEND

U.S.A.

1945

99 Minutes

b/w

DIRECTOR: Billy Wilder. SCREENPLAY: Charles Brackett; Billy Wilder (Based on the novel by Charles R. Jackson). PHOTOGRAPHY: John Seitz. EDITOR: Doane Harrison. MUSIC: Miklos Rosza.

CAST: Ray Milland (Don Birnam); Jane Wyman (Helen St. James); Howard da Sylva (Nat); Philip Terry (Wick Birnam); Doris Dowling (Gloria); Frank Faylen (Bim); Mary Young (Mrs. Deveridge - Lady with a dog); Lillian Fontaine (Mrs. St. James); Lewis L. Russell (Charles St. James); Anita Bolster (Mrs. Foley - Cleaning woman); Helen Dickson (Mrs. Frink); David Clyde (janitor); etc.

"After DOUBLE INDEMNITY, Wilder made THE LOST WEEKEND, the film which, at the age of thirty-eight, brought him into the top class of directors. Though Charles Brackett has said THE LOST WEEKEND was the easiest script we wrote, thanks to the superb pattern of the novel, Wilder has pointed out that the studio was against it right from the start. THE LOST WEEKEND was a daring film in 1945. Alcoholism as such had not been treated on the screen before and the film did nothing to sugarcoat the grim tale of a man tortured by drink. Representatives of the whiskey interests protested on the grounds that any depiction of a five-day binge would prejudice audiences against their product. At the same time, Prohibition groups protested on the grounds that it would incite drinking. Wilder and Breckett ignored them...The whiskey interests announced that a film like THE LOST WEEKEND would be a great boon to producers of the better brands, for Don Birnam drinks the cheapest stuff he can buy, and the Prohibitionists were happy because the film was a lesson on the evils of drink. Ray Milland's portrayal of Don Birnam, the pitiful, congenital drunk, was the best performance so far in his career, and he had to live with it for years. In a Life interview two years after the shooting, he told of a harrowing hangover - of incidents of barkeepers, sailors and passers-by taunting and ridiculing him, of columnists inventing constant gags like 'Milland has invented a new type of home bar'. There were also pathetic letters from drunks. Wilder experimented with pace in THE LOST WEEKEND. The film is slowly paced to enhance the dramatic effect of this weekend of Birnam fighting his craving in some of his calmer moments, then yielding. When he succumbs, nothing stands in his way. He pilfers money left for the housemaid, tries to sell his typewriter, attempts to steal a wallet in a cocktail lounge. Finally, he pawns his girl's coat to buy back a gun. THE LOST WEEKEND has exteriors shot in New York, a novelty Wilder fought hard for, he shot the 'long walk' on Third Avenue with cameras hidden in laundry trucks and empty stores."

-THE TORONTO FILM SOCIETY, August 5, 1969.

"In the novel (the story) is told in a series of implications rather than statements... The film, though it makes good use of the flashback, proceeds far more directly. What, in fact, the writers of the screenplay, Brackett and Wilder, have done is what all imaginative writer-adaptors should do always: translated into terms of the cinema...When its powerful spell has worn off, one sees that the film is a realistic interpretation of a work which is partly poetic."

-Dilys Powell, THE SUNDAY TIMES, 1945.