

## Movie of the Week: The Lost Weekend

"The Lost Weekend" is a strange and striking narrative of a marathon drunk. Based on Charles Jackson's brilliant novel, it chronicles five grim, whiskey-soaked days in the life of a dipsomaniac. The story begins when the dipsomaniac's brother goes off for a weekend in the country, leaving him free to go on a binge which winds up in a case of delirium tremens.

When the novel was published last year, it stirred up a great furor. Liquor groups reportedly tried to suppress its publication. Temperance groups muttered about making capital of the tale. In filming "The Lost Weekend," Paramount has made no concessions to controversy. Nor has it softened any of the novel's harrowing details. The biggest problem for Producer Charles Brackett and Director Billy Wilder, who collaborated on the script, was translating into screen action a psychological look which has little dialogue, few situations and only one principal character. But they used no camera tricks to produce a film which will scare some people, impress most and will certainly rate as one of the year's best.

[Captions for stills from motion picture:]

**Crouched over an eye-opener**, his hand too shaky to lift glass, Don Birnam (Ray Miller) guzzles as bartender (Howard da Silva) glowers.

**Having drunk himself into a state of delirium tremens**, Don imagines that he sees a bat beating frantically about and pouncing on a mouse.

**Confronted with hidden bottle**, Don tells his girl Helen (Jane Wyman) and Wick (Phillip Terry), "You don't understand that I've got to know it's around. I can't be cut off completely. That's what drives you crazy."

**Don frantically seeks another bottle** after Helen and Wick go, tells himself, "You had

another bottle, you know you did. Where did you put it? You're not crazy. WHERE DID YOU PUT IT?" He rushes out to bar.

**At his typewriter** Don struggles to write the story of his drunkenness, thinks, "These are two Don Birnams: Don the drunk and Don the writer." He writes only the title, finally gives up, goes out and gets drunk again.

**In a bar** Don tries to steal a patron's purse. Penniless and desperate, he wonders what stealing would be like: "How would you feel? What could be in it, how much money? What kind of satisfaction would it give you?"

**Slipping purse under coat** he leans back, "filled with admiration for his own shrewd, adroit and disarming performance." But the girl quickly discovers her loss, reports it to her escort and Don is uncovered as the thief.

**Thrown out of the bar** by snarling bouncer, Don winds up shakily on the sidewalk, "trying to hear what the doorman called after him, trying not to see the little group of cabbies staring at him in silent contempt."

**Back in his apartment**, Don slams the lid on his portable typewriter, decides to pawn it for drinking money. Weak and ill, he asks himself, "Could you possibly make 58th Street? Not only make it but get back again?"

**The pawnshop is closed**. Aching for a drink, Don stares at the sign, turns away, pushes himself on to the next pawnshop. This is closed too. He starts on a nightmarish, half-conscious trek all the way to 120th Street.

**He staggers up Third Avenue**, still clutching typewriter, "seeing in his mind's eye how far the last pawnbroker's sign had been, how much farther the next." All the pawnbrokers are closed because it is a Jewish holy day.

**In alcoholic ward**, where he has been taken after falling down stairs, Don spends a macabre night. He steals coat, sneaks through halls muttering "It isn't me, it isn't me." Escaping from the hospital, he staggers home.

**Slumped against apartment door**, Don is found by Helen as he thinks "Does there always have to be some woman hopelessly involved with a hopeless drunk?" By film's end he has started book, may quit drinking.

Source: *Life*, October 15, 1945, pp. 133-136