



# The Asphalt Jungle (RosettaBooks Into Film Book 13)

*W. R. Burnett*

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## **The Asphalt Jungle (RosettaBooks Into Film Book 13) W. R. Burnett**

W.R. Burnett's brutally wise novel *The Asphalt Jungle* (1949) tells how the perfect crime can go easily awry when human nature is a factor, as it always is. Told in short, richly atmospheric chapters, the novel details the planning and execution of a major jewel heist. The robbery is devised by Doc Reimenschneider, a master criminal who has just been released from prison and will require the involvement of a number of people--including the muscle and itinerant hood named Dix, an overgrown country boy, and the fence, a successful but sleazy lawyer named Alonzo Emmerich. The cast of characters will ultimately be the scheme's very downfall in an atmosphere rife with suspicion and double-crossing.

The spelling out of the planning in *The Asphalt Jungle* is fascinating, but what truly grips the audience is the people who are involved and why they come to this point and what the chemistry of the situation does to them. The point of view shifts throughout the novel, providing surprising and deep insights into the characters and our culture at large.

*The Asphalt Jungle* finds an "honest man" in Dix, the petty crook, who in his own way is as decent as the so-called "good guys," the commissioner and the reporter. A man who always seems out of his element, Dix longs to leave the rat race and return to the country setting of his childhood. With that in mind, Dix undertakes involvement in the heist, believing this is the way to make his dream a reality. He comes close--painfully, wistfully close, with punishing irony.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Riley Burnett (1899-1981) was a master of fiction, a skillful writer, contemporary to James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammett. Burnett authored some 36 novels and either wrote alone or in collaboration 60 screenplays. His novels *Little Caesar*, *High Sierra*, *The Asphalt Jungle* represent a rich vein of thought in contemporary American literature and culture.

After he began his career as a writer, Burnett moved to Chicago in the late 1920s at the height of Al Capone's power and sway over the city. It was this atmosphere, Chicago in the '20s and notably the St. Valentine's Day Massacre (Burnett was one of the first people on the scene) that inspired Burnett's first great success *Little Caesar*, which was made into a film by the same name starring Edward G. Robinson.

After this initial success, Burnett had a strong, close working relationship with Hollywood as both a novelist and screenwriter, and eventually found a champion in writer/director John Huston. Burnett collaborated with Huston on the adaptation of *High Sierra* in 1941 in which Humphrey Bogart redefined himself in the role of Roy Earle. The two men's paths crossed again when Huston filmed *The Asphalt Jungle* in 1950. The Mystery Writers of America awarded Burnett their highest honor--the prestigious title of Grand Master--at the 1980 Edgar Awards.

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