

SCREENING #6: *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (96 minutes)

Production Company	Twentieth Century Fox / Produced by Otto Preminger
US Release	7 July 1950 (New York)
Director	Otto Preminger: He was born in 1905, probably in a Ukrainian region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but possibly in Vienna; his family were middle-class Jews. His father became a leading prosecutor for the government, and the family relocated to Vienna in 1915. Otto studied law at the University of Vienna and got his degree in 1928; but by then he had begun a career in the theater, at first under the tutelage of Max Reinhardt. Starting as an actor (of moderate success), he moved into directing and also directed a few German-language films in the early 1930s. In 1935 he was invited by producer Joseph Schenck to come work at Fox in the USA, to which he agreed. Arriving in New York in 1936, he stopped off to direct a play, then went on to Hollywood. His work at Fox came to an abrupt halt in 1938, when he was fired by Zanuck while directing the “A-List” film <i>Kidnapped</i> . So he studied English and resumed a career directing plays in New York and elsewhere. He was called back to Fox in 1942, originally to act in various films. In 1944 he was hired by Zanuck to produce the controversial film version of <i>Laura</i> , eventually becoming its director. The success of this “scandalous” film noir led to his being hired to direct (and often to produce) 13 more films at Fox—the fine film <i>Where the Sidewalk Ends</i> being the next to last. At Fox and after, even if the stories of the films were often flawed, he was noted for being an abusive tyrant, though also for getting excellent results in acting, <i>mise-en-scène</i> , cinematography, and music. From 1952 he became an independent director, and many of the subsequent films continued to delve into what was considered controversial subject matter—e.g., <i>The Moon Is Blue</i> (sex), <i>Carmen Jones</i> (race), <i>The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell</i> (military incompetence), <i>The Man with the Golden Arm</i> (drug addiction), <i>Porgy and Bess</i> , <i>Anatomy of a Murder</i> (rape, wife-beating), <i>Exodus</i> (Zionism), <i>Advise and Consent</i> (the blacklist and homosexuality), and <i>The Cardinal</i> (church corruption). Throughout his career he showed liberal, anti-authoritarian sympathies. While most of the late films (e.g., <i>Rosebud</i> , 1975) were box-office disasters, some <i>auteurist</i> critics see signs of greatness in nearly all of his films. His autobiography, <i>Preminger</i> , was published in 1977. He died in New York in 1986.
Screenplay	Ben Hecht, based on the 1948 “hard-boiled” novel <i>Night Cry</i> , by William L. Stuart (adapted for the screen by Fox writers Victor Trivas, Frank P. Rosenberg, and Robert E. Kent).
Art Direction	J. Russell Spencer & Lyle Wheeler
Photography	Joseph LaShelle (Preminger’s favorite at Fox)
Editor	Louis R. Loeffler
Music	Cyril Mockridge (A skilled Fox regular; the main theme, though, is by Alfred Newman—it’s from his 1931 score for <i>Street Scene</i> —and there is very little music in the film overall.)

Main Cast: **Dana Andrews** (*Detective Mark Dixon*); **Gene Tierney** (*Morgan Taylor*); **Gary Merrill** (*Tommy Scalise*); Bert Freed (*Det. Paul Klein*); Karl Malden (*Lt. Thomas*); Tom Tully (*Jiggs Taylor*)

“A cop is basically a criminal,” Preminger remarked [in the 1970s, working on another film]. “Why do cops like to hit people? Because when they become cops, they satisfy and instinct for violence, only it becomes legalized violence.” ... Dixon’s violence remains at the core of the film, and Dixon’s ambivalence [is] characteristic of Preminger’s conception of character and projected ideally through Dana Andrews’s performance. ... *Where the Sidewalk Ends* is one of Preminger’s great films on obsession and anguish.” — Chris Fujiwara, *The World and Its Double: The Life and Work of Otto Preminger* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 123-124.

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