

For all of its late-1940s cold war paranoia, pulp fiction dialogue, and frenzied greed, Joel and Ethan Coen's *The Man Who Wasn't There* is their most cool and collected film since *Blood Simple*. An unassuming barber with a scheming wife (Frances McDormand) and a serious smoking habit, Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton) is an onlooker to his own life, a ghostly presence set against a silver-toned film noir backdrop. Only when he decides to alter his fate by blackmailing his wife's lover (James Gandolfini) in order to invest with a traveling salesman (Jon Polito) touting the wave of the future