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an old dance programme, and done by Duvivier, too. He did it in *Un Carnet du Bal*, an episodic story about a middle-aged woman's attempts to trace the sweethearts of her youth, which I hope you had the good fortune to see. If not, you missed something. You may also fail to understand the rather critical tone of this review. But it would be impossible for anyone who saw Duvivier's *Carnet* not to make comparisons with Duvivier's *Tales*. From a critic's point of view, indeed from that of anyone who is interested in the art of the films, those two productions provide an object-lesson in technique. And there is even more to it than that. When Duvivier's new film is examined by the light of his old one, almost everything that we mean by the word "Hollywood" is revealed. All the faults of the American cinema and its star-system stand out in sharp relief—its lack of proportion, its worship of Big Names, its measurement of nearly everything by the money it costs. For although the French used fine actors in their films, they put the story and its treatment by the director first, and did not allow the salaries or the personalities of the stars to get in the way; whereas Hollywood builds everything round its stars and the screen personalities that have been created for them.

This is so obvious in *Tales of Manhattan* that you can almost see Hollywood's mind working. Here's Charles Boyer, secured at enormous expense. Good; he's been made famous as the Great Lover-Matinee Idol type, so we'll create an episode showing him in that light. And here's Henry Fonda, the tongue-tied gauche young man of a dozen pictures. All right; an episode for him. Roland Young? Must fit him somehow as a comic valet. Charles Laughton? Something sentimental that demands what some of the critics call "mugging" but what the public has been led to believe is brilliant acting. Paul Robeson, eh? Well, obviously he must sing. In fact, let's have an all-negro sequence, with plenty of broad comedy and revival-meeting religion. Audiences love it.

Well, I don't know about audiences; but Paul Robeson, who is rightly a bit touchy about the status of the negro, certainly didn't love it. When he saw the finished sequence he declared that it made his race look ridiculous, and added, "If they picket the theatres, I'll join the picket line myself."

* * *

IF any kind of art emerges from this kind of film-making, it is usually by accident. That some does emerge occasionally from *Tales of Manhattan* is partly because even the great amorphous, undigested mass of story-material and star-personalities cannot completely stifle Duvivier's native talents, and partly because some of the players are such fine artists (Thomas Mitchell and Edward G. Robinson, for instance) that they can breathe life even into inherently phoney situations. (And phoney is the word for most of the *Tales*.)

Artistically, then, the film is a mess. As entertainment, however, it is something else again. I would liken it to a mixed grill and say that, as with most mixed grills (pre-meat-rationing ones), there are some items you will relish and

others you would just as soon leave on the side of your plate. As to which should be so treated one can already hear great argument: the film is one of the current topics of conversation. I will merely indicate my preference for the first episode (because of Mr. Mitchell) and the fourth (because of Mr. Robinson)—the kidney and the bacon of the dish, so to speak.



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