

SOUTH SEA FLAHERTY

MOANA

(Flaherty-Paramount)

ONCE upon a time (it was early last year) I was trying to find out how long we would have to wait before seeing Robert Flaherty's latest—and, as it turned out, his last—film, *Louisiana Story* (completed in 1948). I inquired first of the local office of the studio which distributed the picture in the United States, but no one there seemed to know of the film's existence. No one seemed to have heard of Flaherty either, and that piqued my curiosity. I tried the other offices (just out of curiosity, of course) and got the same result. One offered me *Louisiana Purchase* and Bob Hope, but that was the only nibble I got. A prophet, you might say, is not without honour save in his own line of business.

Since then Flaherty has died. Since then, too, Flaherty and his work have had a little more publicity here than has generally been given them. *Nanook of the North* has made a welcome return visit; through the good offices of

the BBC Transcription Service and the NZBS we have heard Flaherty himself; if you are a film society member you may now have a chance to see his second film, *Moana*, and there is even news from the North of the arrival here of a print of *Louisiana Story*.

I saw *Moana* last week and thought it good—but not quite so good as I had expected, and that left a trace of disappointment. I was, of course, remembering the excitement of *Nanook* and its brisk action, but after ruminating over my impressions I wondered if Flaherty himself had not remembered *Nanook* too well. I felt that he had carried into the South Pacific a pre-conceived notion of what he was going to do—perhaps the notion "that it is a devilish noble thing to fight for food in a wilderness," to borrow Grierson's phrase. That was the theme of *Nanook* and it worked excellently within the Arctic Circle, where the struggle for food and warmth and life was a continuous guerrilla campaign. The physical effort involved in the story of *Nanook* and his family generated its own exciting pace and comfortable warmth, but among the natives of New Zealand Samoa (where *Moana*

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "*Moana*."
FAIR: "*He Ran All the Way*."
OVERCAST: "*Pool of London*."

was filmed in 1926) these basic drives do not operate with the same urgency. *Moana*, therefore, though it is cut to the same pattern, is slower moving, more sensuous, less exciting. There are struggles to parallel *Nanook's* battles, but they are light-hearted affairs—even the capture of a wild boar becomes a sort of picnic—and the long ritual tattooing of *Moana* when he comes of age is scarcely the dramatic equivalent of an encounter with a walrus or a basking shark.

But Flaherty's love for the noble savage, and his skill with a camera, have made *Moana* a very beautiful record of Polynesian life. I don't know how sound it is anthropologically—I find it difficult to believe that any Samoans were living so free from European influences as late as 1926—but it will be a long time, I feel, before I see again on the screen such a comely and graceful trio as *Moana*, his small brother Pe'a, and his betrothed Fa'angase. If I didn't find their story exciting enough then no doubt the fault was in me—and in that odd un-Polynesian notion that it is a devilish noble thing to fight for a living.

HE RAN ALL THE WAY

(United Artists)

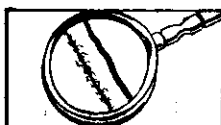
PRODUCED by Bob Roberts, and directed by John Berry, this study of a psychopathic young hoodlum who fumbles a payroll robbery, kills a policeman, then forces a working-class family (at the pistol-point) to shelter him through one tingling week-end, proved a great deal better than I expected it to be. There are a number of touches in both acting and direction which have become almost clichés in this kind of production (and the last sequence in which the murderer dies in the gutter by the car in which he meant to make his getaway has, I'll swear, been used before). But in general the quality of the direction is efficient and workmanlike, there is some effective photography, and as the gutter-bred tough John Garfield turns on a well thought out and generally convincing performance. More unexpected to me was the quality of performance put on by Shelley Winters (thoroughly de-glamoured), as the vacuous factory-girl who unwittingly introduces the criminal into her own home. *He Ran All the Way* is by no means in championship class, but it will hold your attention and may even make you think a little about America's home-grown problems.



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