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REVIVALS IN FOCUS

A Critical Guide by Andrew Sarris & Tom Allen

Wednesday

Anthony Mann's **Side Street** (1950), from a screenplay by Sydney Boehm, with Farley Granger, Cathy O'Donnell, James Craig, Paul Kelly, and Jean Hagen, is a downbeat but fascinating jaunt into *Naked City* verismo through the backdoor of social realism that Dore Schary briefly opened at MGM. Lenny Hayton's jazzy score and Joseph Ruttenberg's hard-edged photography vividly captured the granite canyons of Manhattan and the vistas of Wall Street at morning. Mann angled the dark shadows between the sunny skyscrapers into a fatalistic grid on which to impale Granger's common man, a harried veteran who is unable to support his pregnant wife legitimately. Granger is again matched with O'Donnell and with the plot configurations of *They Live by Night*. While the new story is decidedly weaker in sociological ramifications, the treatment is more harsh and implacable. Nonetheless, Mann, the master of urban noir in such films as *T-Men* and *Raw Deal*, is relatively subdued without a strong, sympathetically intelligent antagonist. The movie only explodes around Craig's stylishly homicidal gangster, most notably in the scream-strangling kiss of death that he executes in the back of a cab. Hagen plays a wretchedly masochistic moll with as much mastery as she did in *The Asphalt Jungle*. (Co-feature: Nicholas Ray's *They Live by Night*) Film Forum 2: also Thursday, 5:15, 8:40.