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BON VOYAGE/AVENTURE MALGACHE

By Tom Milne

Two nuggets for the Hitchcock completist. Arriving in London at the end of 1943, anxious to do his bit for the war effort after completing *Lifeboat*, Hitchcock - through the mediation of Sidney Bernstein - found himself making two half-hour featurettes for the Ministry of Information. Both were shot in French, using an ad hoc group called the Molière Players, and intended solely (no English versions were prepared) for propaganda purposes, encouraging resistance in France and, especially, her colonies. Despite rough edges and occasionally recalcitrant cattle among the cast, both films are surprisingly ambitious, beautifully shot by the great ex-Ufa cameraman Günther Krampf, and fascinating for their wealth of Hitchcockery.



Bon Voyage

Bon Voyage might almost fit in as an episode for Hitch's later TV series. A Scottish RAF air gunner, who has escaped from a POW camp in Germany and made it safely back to Britain, is being interrogated by a Free French Intelligence officer. As he explains how he was helped and guided by a Polish fellow-escapee, we watch (in flashback) the perilous last stages of his journey through France, passed from hand to hand by ambivalent strangers through a series of sinister rendezvous that - he hopes - adds up to an underground Resistance network. In London, though, he learns that the Pole was not what he seemed. And we plunge straight back into a re-run of the journey, with details that seemed off-key before now properly in tune, and a fresh perspective that reveals how the machinating Gestapo is finally hoist by its own petard. One thinks, oddly, and admittedly in more conventional terms, of Hitch's later games with perception in *Vertigo*.

Aventure Malgache is very different, and in some ways less rewarding. It was made, as Hitchcock later told François Truffaut, to expound the inner conflicts which divided the Free French (and which had become apparent during script conferences). The conflicting loyalties between Gaullists, Pétainists and Vichyites are now pretty much an open book, and make some of the film's plotting seem unnecessarily tortuous. At the time, though, this was an area sensitive enough to make the film an object of official suspicion, and it was never released.