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HOLLYWOOD IN THE 40S  
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Closely related to the Chandlers and Hammetts in style was Bruce Humberstone's *Hot Spot* (1941), with Laird Cregar as a psychotic cop. Delmer Daves' *Dark Passage* (1947) was in many ways superior to all of these films save *The Maltese Falcon*. In subjective camera, we follow an escaped criminal from San Quentin, concealed in a barrel, rolling down an embankment, hitching a ride from a petty crook and finally finding concealment with an artist in a flat filled with the sound of the San Francisco foghorns. Bogart as escapee and Bacall as artist guardian play with enchanting grace and humour, so that a dinner enjoyed across a candlelit table, the playing of a tinny gramophone record, the moment when she unwraps his operated-on face and sees him for the first time, achieve an unusually warm sense of intimacy.

The film is directed with a tense impressionist vividness, bringing to life within a fully realised San Franciscan ambience a whole small world of personal relationships. Agnes Moorehead's prying, vicious Madge Rapf is a definitive portrait of bitchery; Houseley Stevenson's plastic surgeon is a memorable gargoyle; and the minor parts — a taxi driver, a blackmailer, even the bystanders in a bus terminal — are brought before us with startling realism. Fluent cutting and Sid Hickox's subtle camerawork evoke the enclosed luxury of the apartment, a spiral staircase, a spinning record, a face pressed to a door-grille, a man nervously withdrawing into the shadows of an upstairs room. A bitter quarrel between friends in the flat late at night, punctuated by foghorns; an operation scene, developed in bizarre montage full of laughing faces and flashing cigarette-lighters; and the death of Madge from a high window: this is a film in which the images and sounds are orchestrated without flaw.