BOTTOMS UP (Fox, 1934) Directed by David Butler; produced by B.G. DeSylva; Original story by DeSylva, Butler and Sid Silvers; Camera, Arthur Miller; Art Director, Joseph August; Sets, Morris E. Englund; Costumes, Irene Sharaff; Music & Lyrics, Harold Adamson, Gus Kahn, Burton Lane, Richard Whiting; Dance Director, Harold Hecht; Musical Director, Constantin Bakaleinikoff; 80 mins. With Spencer Tracy, John Boles, Pat Patterson, Herbert Mundin, Sid Silvers, Harry Green, Thelma Todd, Robert Emmett O'Connor, Dell Henderson, Susanne Kaaren, Douglas Green.

Both of tonight's films are amiably foolish, and should mesh quite agreeably, "Bottoms Up" (the 16th of the 20 films Spencer Tracy made for Fox between 1930 and 1935) starts out beautifully, with brisk, snappy dialogue and that curious mix of warmth and coolness, several depressions, a few crises, most notably of course "Hallelujah I'm A Bum". The charm and grace of the now almost forgotten Pat Patterson is another bonus. (She is remembered today more as the wife of Charles Boyer; and it is pure coincidence, not careful planning, that caused the co-feature to be a Boyer film). But as the film progresses, something happens to it; seemingly it develops into a bigger film than was planned, and as it does so, it plays safe by adapting itself to a more standardized formula. The disappearance of the early relaxed spontaneity prevents the film from being the exciting rediscovery of the early Hollywood background. It was considered big enough to premiere at the Radio City Music Hall (another one of those recently shown "Marie Galante") which appears to have been adequate, if a little under-produced and too short and too poorly produced than the scenes showed. The culprit here seems to have been Thelma Todd. She is pointedly excused from the credits, and many of her scenes were obviously either scrapped or not completed. One can never get enough of Thelma Todd anyway, but here the shortage is critical; she just disappears from many key scenes, and attempts to edit around her are jarring. She made six films in 1934, so probably there was a shooting overlap or a production delay. (She died in 1935, and "Bottoms Up" was released in the Spring of '34, so it's not a case of her role being uncompleted because of her death, as in fact did happen with "The Bohemian Girl"). The songs are all quite sprightly, though the final big number is a bit anti-climactic, and is one of those irritating sequences that is apparently being shot by a camera crew as part of a movie, yet emerges on screen with all of the intercutting and elaborate optical effecter all (including John Boles disappearing into thin air) already fully accomplished! — Ten Minute Intermission —-


Surprisingly exuded from the MoMA's recent Comedy and Universal cycles, "Appointment for Love" is a member of that once-prolific (essentially during the war years) but now vanished breed, the comedy of the unconsummated marriage. Of course this genre couldn't make much headway today against all the comedies of excessively-consumated non-marriages. W.C. Fields and Preston Sturges apart, the very early 40's seemed, at the time, to be a rather barren field for comedy, but now as we look back, we realise that we weren't so badly off after all. Apart from tonight's film, 1941 gave us "The Man Who Came to Dinner", "The Bride Came C.O.D.", "That Uncertain Feeling", "Ball of Fire", "The Devil and Miss Jones", "Hellzapoppin" and, a standout among the "B" comedies, "Buy Me That Town" - not a bad crop at all for a year in which big emotional dramas ("Hold Back the Dawn", "Blossoms in the Dust", "Smiling Through" and a dozen others) constituted the dominant trend. There was a wartime market for comedy (even more notably in England, where "Appointment for Love" was an especially big hit) and despite being trivial, and occasionally trying to turn little jokes into big ones, this film was well-liked. It had its two big romantic stars letting their hair down as a follow-up to their earlier (and sadder) 1941 film "Back Street" (made by the same writer/producer). For stars of their magnitude, it's light, frothy stuff, perhaps unworthy of them. But it's a pleasant, non-outraged piece of fluff, somewhat of a forerunner to the later Tracy/Hepburn comedies. There are no special highlights, but it's consistently amusing, the lines are good, the photography and sets bright and cheery, and overall it readily lends itself to Seiter's obvious working again with his old star of silent Universal comedies, Reginald Denny. All in all, an unimportant, forgettable, but while it's on screen, most enjoyable comedy. — William K. Everson —

Program finishes, 11.15