

Gribiche

France : 1925 : dir. Jacques Feyder : Albatross
prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Jean Forest](#)
Françoise Rosay

Silent : 102 min

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⊗	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5652	2.5	3	1	818	3	-	-	-	-	No	<i>unseen</i>



Holmstrom's caption (often witty) reads – "Almost too clean... Jean Forest yearns for the simple life in 'GRIBICHE' "
Source: The Moving Picture Boy

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

“A comedy-drama, conceivably meant as a corrective to the many silent melodramas which proposed that all an orphan needed was a kind benefactor. Gribiche (Jean Forest) has a mother but a wealthy American widow (Françoise Rosay) repays her gratitude for the return of a lost purse by adopting and educating him, but not with any regard to his feelings. ** ”

The Silent Cinema incidental note:

“...[after **“WOMAN OF ATLANTIS”**] ...Feyder's next films, **“CRAINQUEBILLE”** (1922) and **“VISAGES D'ENFANTS”** (1924) were on a simpler scale and featured the sensitive child actor Jean Forest...”

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Jean Forest:

“The dark, sleek-haired Forest eventually had the looks of a matinee idol (though a sensitive and charming one), but there was nothing smooth about his first characterisation as “The Mouse” in Jacques Feyder’s **“CRAINQUEBILLE”**, based on the Anatole France story of an old vegetable-seller befriended by a guttersnipe.

His next for Feyder, **“VISAGES D'ENFANTS”**, took him deeper. It was a bitterly truthful study of the resentment of a little Swiss boy, still mourning his mother, who is abruptly presented with an unsympathetic stepmother and stepsister. Eleven-year old Jean was remarkable in it, a tiny figure simmering with grief and rage.

He had been spotted, a couple of years earlier, by Feyder and his wife Françoise Rosay in the Place du Tertre, where the Forests lived. Feyder persuaded the parents to give him guardianship of the boy, who was thus removed from his working-class surroundings and transplanted into an atmosphere of middle-class culture. The situation is weirdly echoed

in the 1925 film **“GRIBICHE”** (directed by Feyder) in which Jean plays a Paris urchin who is adopted by a rich American lady (Rosay) but pines for his mother. By an even weirder coincidence, his real-life mother died at this point, and he really was adopted by Rosay – a fate which would have been envied by many Parisian orphans.

“GRIBICHE”, his last film for Feyder, shows Jean Forest in his finest colours: graceful, frisky, humorous and sad by turns. He had already shared the lead in the serial **“LES DEUX GOSSES”** for Louis Mercanton, and henceforth he worked for other directors, with three more leading roles before childhood ended.

After a pause for puberty, Forest returned in **“UNE FEMME A MENTI”** (1930, the French version of **“THE LADY LIES”**) and in the title role of **“ETIENNE”** (32). After two 1935 films, **“TOVARICH”** and **“LA ROUTE IMPÉRIALE”**, his last appearance was as the apostle John in Duvivier’s **“GOLGOTHA”** of 1936.

Two years later he began a career in radio, where he became a distinguished writer: two of his scripts, *“Une Larme du Diable”* (51) and *“La Composition de Calcul”* (56) won Prix Italia awards. His son Jean-François later worked in TV.”

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "Hollywood in the Twenties", "A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Indeed, it's surprising to find any French silent film listed, even in *“The Good Film and Video Guide”*. The BBC's 1995 series **“Cinema Europe – the Other Hollywood”**, showed several excerpts of Jean Forest in the earlier **“VISAGES D'ENFANTS”**, in which he ultimately attempts suicide and is rescued by his new mother.

Even from such brief glimpses it was clear that Jacques Feyder was a remarkably naturalistic director for the day, handling his themes with considerable subtlety, and in his hands Jean Forest was a strangely intense boy actor. None of their films together are ever shown on TV, despite excellent prints being available, although they will – very rarely – crop up at the NFT.

The French cinema of childhood seems notable for a harder edge than American, British or Scandinavian films in general, with titles like “**POIL DE CAROTTE**”, “**VISAGES D’ENFANTS**”, “**LE QUATRE CENTS COUPS**” and “**L’ENFANCE NUE**” presenting adoption, stepmothers, and natural parents in a cold unsympathetic light, and without falsely idealising children in the process. With such insights, the pity is that Feyder did not work with Forest more often.

See subject index under **ORPHANS / ADOPTION** and **SILENT CINEMA**.