

Jean Forest

Titles: 7 Sources: 2 Stills: 2

Born: Paris; 27th September 1912
Died: 17th March 1980



Nope, he's not balefully contemplating, hairbrush at the ready, another richly-deserved spanking. As "GRIBICHE", he's pining for earlier, less well-groomed days before his "adoption" by a rich benefactress.

Source: The Moving Picture Boy



Early mugging strategies - Left, with English boy Lewis Shaw in the 1925 serial "**LES DEUX GOSSES**"

Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"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 "**CRAINQUE-BILLE**", 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."

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..."

FILMOGRAPHY

Year	Age	Title	Role
22	10	CRAINQUEBILLE	as "the Mouse"
23	11	VISAGES D'ENFANTS (<i>"The Faces of Children"</i>)	
24	12	LES DEUX GOSSES (<i>"The Two Kids"</i>) with <i>Lewis Shaw</i>	serial, in central role
24		JOCASTE	
25	13	GRIBICHE	in title role
25		JACK	
27	15	LES COEURS HÉROÏQUES (<i>"Brave Hearts"</i>)	
30	18	UNE FEMME A MENTI (<i>"A Woman has Lied"</i>)	
32	20	ETIENNE	in title role