

Nous les Gosses

("Us Kids")

France : 1941 : dir. Louis Daquin : Pathé

: 90 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

Jean-Pierre Geffroy; Jean Buquet

Louise Carletti; Gilbert Gil; Pierre Larquey; André Brunot; Raymond Brussières;
Lucien Coëdel; Louis Seigner; Paul Frankeur

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Geffroy second from left

Source: Junior Film Annual 1946-47



Jean Buquet (left) and Jean-Pierre Geffroy

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

“A schoolboy’s mischief results in damage which he has to pay for, but he doesn’t dare tell this to his hard-up parents. Together with his small friends he tries to get the money together by all kinds of holiday work, but one of them takes off with the proceeds. Entertaining and spontaneous young persons’ film without a pedagogic overlay, which despite changed circumstances has lost little of its freshness. *** ”

The Cinema note:

“ **"NOUS LES GOSSES"** (France 1941), directed by Louis Daquin, with Jean Pierre Geffroy, Gilbert Gil and Louise Carletti. This delightfully observed comedy of school-children who spend their Easter holidays to collect money for a window they have broken, was scripted before the War, and shows no signs of the Occupation period in which it was made; in its simplicity and directness lies its charm.”

Junior Film Annual 1947-47 synopsis:

“French boys are just as fond of football as English boys, and unfortunately glass breaks just as easily in Paris as anywhere else.

One morning near the end of term, Nicholas, the Paris schoolboy, was playing football in the playground. He kicked the ball, there was a crash of glass: and there was a broken window.

The Head was very annoyed and threatened to make Nicholas pay for the damage, which was frightening news for Nicholas. His parents were poor and very strict, and he shrank from the thought of asking them to pay up.

When they heard about it, his school friends-Rozet, Andre, " Tom Mix," "Doudou" and the rest-looked on his plight with the seriousness it deserved, and decided to help him themselves rather than let him tell his father and mother about the disaster.

They pooled all their resources in ready cash, but the result was disappointing. They had therefore to think of some other means of raising the sum needed.

One of them peddled in the market. Another became a bootblack. Some helped farmers in the country. Others picked early spring flowers and sold them. A band of them who fondly believed themselves to be musical actually sang in the street.

Rozet was the driving force behind them. It was he who had the idea of staying away from the pictures when their parents gave them money to go, sending only one boy to see the film, so that he could tell them the story of it to be retold to their families. A bright idea, but spoilt by the boy's habit of falling asleep in the cinema !

In spite of this, in time they got their reward. The correct amount was placed in the safe-keeping of Rozet and his pretty sister, Mariette whom Monsieur Maurin, their young form-master, meant to marry.

Then everything went wrong. Two gangsters stole the money from Rozet. Some of the children suspected Rozet and his sister of having taken the money themselves and invented the story about the gangsters. Mariette was very sensitive about it and quarrelled. with Maurin.

The rest of the children still believed in Rozet, however. So did Uncle Finot, an old man who kept a newsagent's shop and liked to imagine himself an amateur detective.

It was no easy task to collect evidence against the criminals, and the children would not let the gangsters out of their sight for a moment. Nor did the two gangsters find it easy to shake off the embarrassing company of the crowd of boys and girls who followed them wherever they went.

Old Finot arrived with his evidence complete in time, and the two thieves were arrested. Maurin and Mariette were reconciled. The children went out happily to the school playground for the break. A football was produced, and one boy trapped it with his foot.

He kicked the ball, there was a crash of glass : and there was a broken window - the same window"

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Buquet:

"The leader of the anti-Rozet faction in **"NOUS LES GOSSES"** was an aggressive, rather sneering 15-year old (with faint touches

of Jean Gabin and Farley Granger) who three years earlier had been a treacherous little wimp in **"LES DISPARUS DE SAINT AGIL"**. However he could, on occasion, be quite a dear. In his late teens Buquet was in four more films: in 1942 **"LES CADETS DE L'OCEAN"** and **"FOU D'AMOUR"**, in 1943 **"LUCRECE"** and **"LE CARREFOUR"**. Then, in 1944, he volunteered for military service, and was in the liaison section of Leclerc's army during the final invasion of Germany. After the war he became a press reporter."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Geffroy:

"His father, Henri-Charles Geffroy (1895-1981), was a medical journalist who did much to popularise "natural diet" in France through many books and through his periodical "La Vie Claire", which in turn led to the health food shops of the same name.

Out of some 2,000 young applicants, young Jean-Pierre was chosen by the actor Gaston Modot – who had had a hand in the script – to play the leading role of Rozet in Louis Daquin's **"NOUS LES GOSSES"**, probably the most popular French children's film of all time. As it appeared in 1941, under the German occupation, this story of youthful solidarity was taken to the Parisian heart almost as a metaphor of survival.

It tells how an accident-prone boy kicks a football through an expensive school window, how his schoolmates raise the replacement money through fantastic commercial and artistic enterprise in the streets, how the money is then stolen by a pair of spivs, and how the kids get it back and bring them to justice. The story ends with a moving speech of congratulation from the headmaster – after which the same hapless boy propels a football through the brand-new window.

It's a film of lovely gags and lovely performances. Among some rather less honourable money-raising ploys (spraying mud onto the shoes of passing gentlemen to boost the boot-blackening, or posing as the starving children of a fake beggar) is a very thoughtful one: they all agree to donate their "cinema money", but in case the parents ask what they have been to see, just one boy is deputed to go to the cinema and then retail the plot to the rest. Unfortunately he falls asleep in the middle of **"LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS"** and wakes up again in the

middle of the supporting cowboy film – with predictably charming results when one of his mates has to describe the plot to his elders.

Geffroy (wrongly credited on the film as "Geoffroy") was 15 at the time of filming, but looks and sounds two years younger. He has a remarkable, streamlined face which recalls a



Holmstrom, with his characteristic wit, describes Geffroy as resembling "a Norman knight looking fiercely through his helmet" – and so he does Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

Norman knight looking fiercely through his helmet, its power contrasting touchingly with the skinny body and the gentle, musical voice. He breathes utter desolation when the money vanishes and he, of all people, is suspected of pinching it.

Jean-Pierre's real-life parents, however, had a poor opinion of theatricals, and though he was allowed two more tiny film parts, there could be no question of pursuing an acting career. He married and settled down to help run the family health business. He is now an absurdly youthful grandfather – a tribute, presumably, to his father's dietary regime."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "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"]

In all likelihood this was an unattributed inspiration for the later Ealing comedy "**HUE AND CRY**" (47), not to mention English boys' books like "*The Otterbury Incident*", although crooks were hounded through the streets by kids even earlier still in the popular German film "**EMIL UND DIE DETEKTIVE**" (31), which was remade three times, but each version more anaemic than the last. For a similar French boys' film of the period, see "**LES DISPARUS DE SAINT-AGIL**" (38).

Both Buquet and Geffroy were 15, though they scarcely look it. Buquet made this at the end of a busy boyhood career in film, among his credits "**BOUT DE CHOUT**" ("Little Pet", 35), "**LA GUERRE DES GOSSES**" ("The Kids' War", 36), "**LE ROMAN DE WERTHER**" (38) and "**L'ASSASSINAT DU PERE NOEL**" ("The Murder of Father Christmas", 41). Geffroy's only other films were "**LA BELLE AVENTURE**" and "**LE VOLLE BLEU**", both in 1942.

See subject index under [ENTERPRISE / YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS](#), **FOLLOW THE LEADER / CHILDREN'S GANGS, KID DETECTIVES, KIDS OUTWIT THE CROOKS** and **FOOTBALL**, since it provides the impetus of the story at least..