

Le Petit Roi

("The Little King")

France : 1933 : dir.

: ? min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Robert Lynen](#)

Adult cast unknown

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The Moving Picture Boy entry on Lynen:

"Though both Robert's parents were artistic, neither was of the cinema: his father was a painter, his mother a former singer of American extraction. The boy was a strange selection, on the face of it, to portray "Carrots", the tragically misunderstood hero of Jules Renard's story, in its first sound version in 1932. (The director, Duvivier, had already made a successful silent one seven years earlier.) He had no previous acting experience, and his dreamy, poetic air didn't suggest the mischievousness that was a necessary part of "**POIL DE CAROTTE**"'s make-up. But, with the scenario tailored to fit his very different temperament, and Alexandre Tansman's music to create a haunting atmosphere. the frail, skinny Lynen, peering through a mist of freckles, is unforgettable.

Overnight, Robert became France's favourite child. The public longed to see him rescued from rural misery: very well then, he should become a boy king ("**LE PETIT ROI**"), and have royalty thrust on him again a few years later ("**L'ÉDUCATION DU PRINCE**"). But he should also continue from time to time to embrace poverty ("**SANS FAMILLE**", "**LE PETIT CHOSE**"). Lynen really was a star. He was neither good-looking, nor cute, nor funny, nor even particularly boyish. On the contrary, he was a pale, delicate creature (without benefit of freckles) with a soft, rather feminine profile. But there was sweetness and intelligence and a kind of gallantry about him that touched all hearts.

Of his remaining eight films, one was Duvivier's famous "**UN CARNET DE BAL**" (37), and there were to be two more star roles

in 1938, in "**L'ÉDUCATION DU PRINCE**" and "**LE PETIT CHOSE**". He was also featured in "**MOLLENARD**" (37), "**LE FRAUDEUR**" (37) and "**LA VIE EST MAGNIFIQUE**" (38). But the shadows were gathering around Robert Lynen. In 1937 his unstable father had killed himself by jumping from a fifth-floor window; and in September 1939 France went to war.

Lynen was in two more films: "**ÉSPOIRS**" (40) and "**CAP DU LARGE**" (42). The latter had been filmed in the Zone Libre, and on February 7 1943, soon after its completion, he was arrested by German security agents and charged with being a resistance fighter. He was imprisoned at Marseilles, then moved to Fresnes and finally across the border to Karlsruhe, where he was executed on April Fool's Day, 1944. Heroes don't always look like heroes. A year earlier, as it happened, Robert's father in "**POIL DE CAROTTE**", the great Harry Baur, had died after being arrested and tortured by the Germans."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "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"]

No further information currently available. Lynen's story is so interesting as to be worth retelling in full, but it leaves us none the wiser about this film. Boy kings were ten a penny in the 1920s and 30s. Several editions of "**THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER**" aside, we saw Jackie Coogan in "**LONG LIVE THE KING**" (23), Mickey Rooney in "**MY PAL, THE KING**" (32), Freddie Bartholomew in "**ANNA KARENINA**" (35) and "**PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER**" (36). In 1958 Oliver Grimm was a "**MAJESTAT AUF ABWEGEN**", while on television endearing European child monarchs have been rescued and/or democratised in episodes of various series like "**The Man From U.N.C.L.E.**".

Lynen was 12, and followed this in 1934 with "**SANS FAMILLE**" (later remade) and in 35 with "**SON AUTRE AMOUR**" ("His Other Love"), but it would be hard to watch his performances today without the grim awareness that he would be murdered before he saw 22.

See subject index under **ARISTOCRACY / ROYALTY**.