

L'Enfance Nue

("Naked Childhood")

France : 1968 : dir. Maurice Pialat : Stephan Films

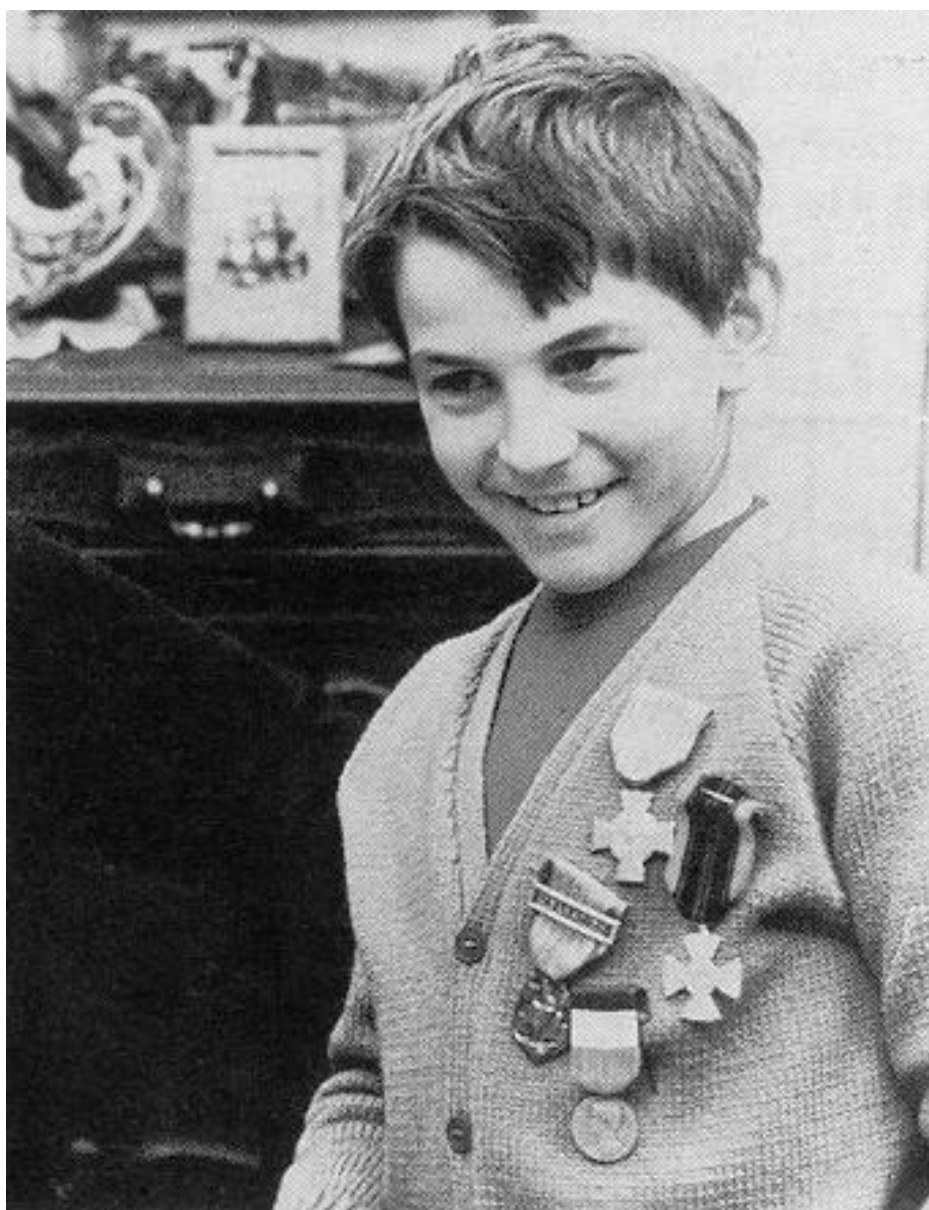
: 90 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Michel Tarrazon](#); [Henri Puff](#)

Linda Gutemberg; Raoul Billerey; Pierrette Deplanque; Marie-Louise & René Thierry;
Marie Marc; Maurice Coussoneau

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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A boy with – in 1990s social worker parlance – “abandonment issues”. Michel Tarrazon gets lowdown and orneriness in “**L'ENFANCE NUE**”.

Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"The ten-year old son of an unmarried mother is sent by the adoption agencies from foster family to foster family and is ostracised by the natural children. Even a well-meaning elderly couple can make no headway with him. Pialat's debut film has all the unsentimental style and apparently spontaneous observation of his later work and gives a painfully penetrating picture of the young central character's isolation. ***½"

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"François (Michel Tarrazon) is a destructive 10-year old and it is hardly surprising that a succession of foster parents constantly return him to the orphanage. He is finally left with a middle-aged couple (Marie-Louise Thierry, René Thierry) with a score of children of their own and no idea how to handle François, but they give him love. This is Pialat's first film: set among the grimy mining towns of Northern France, it is tender and perceptive, as well as being beautifully acted by its amateur cast. ***"

Excerpt from **International Film Guide 1982** retrospective on director Pialat:

".. He had, however, to wait almost ten years before making his real debut as a feature film director. With the help of Francois Truffaut and Claude Berri - two colleagues who shared the same interest in the study of childhood, as witness their own first films: **"LES 400 COUPS"** and **"LE VIEIL HOMME ET L'ENFANT"** - he shot **"L'ENFANCE NUE"** (1969) in the North of France. He used mostly non-professionals, and after several months spent at gathering documentary material about the world of social assistance he filmed the life of an orphan adopted in turn by two different families.

He has admitted that many details in the film were autobiographical - and the same holds true, in an even much more literal way, for **"NOUS NE VIEILLIRONS PAS ENSEMBLE"** and **"LOULOU"** - and that the character of the young Francois borrows much from his own childhood. The young boy resists all attempts made by the families to integrate him into their circle; he remains marginal and looks at them with a cold eye.

Pialat avoids all the pitfalls of the subject (sentimentality, moist humanism, didacticism,

optimism). He achieves right away the perfect balance between the spontaneity of the actors and the rigorous discipline of a style without affectation. Pialat's realism has nothing to do with the documentary tradition (though he uses some of its techniques). It condenses, stylises, structures fragments of reality which are at the basis of his enterprise. These characteristics are to be found in all his later films and the director has often stated that he has little imagination, that every time he tries to add fictitious episodes to his storyline, he discovers they are obtrusive and he has to discard them. His humble approach allows him to discover the complex feelings of his lower class characters while his artistic sense leads him to transcend naturalism and reach a superior realism akin to that of Chardin or Cézanne in painting."

12th London Film Festival - 1968 - programme review:

"Rare indeed is the film these days that makes you cry without also making you feel ashamed afterwards: this is one of them. For director Maurice Pialat in **"L'ENFANCE NUE"**, his first film, has realised that the story of an unwanted boy - deserted by his mother, and then farmed out to prospective adoptive families - was so heartbreaking in itself that the only way to treat it was with warm austerity. And this is why you don't feel ashamed afterwards. But the performances he gets from his non-professional actors are rounded, real, and passionate. And that is why you cry. Perhaps the most authentic film ever made about the salvation of a human being. The sleeper of the Venice Festival."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Tarrazon:

"Both Michel Tarrazon's films were directed by Maurice Pialat, though Michel has only a secondary role in the TV serial **"La Maison des Bois"**.

In **"L'ENFANCE NUE"** - Pialat's remarkable feature debut, which won many awards, including the Jean Vigo prize in Paris - Tarrazon plays a child handed over by his mother to the public authorities. He wreaks various kinds of havoc in the homes of two foster-families, and ends up in a reformatory. He gives a real and tragic study of a puzzling child, whose obvious likeableness is continually

undermined by what seem almost gratuitous acts of mischief.

A more phlegmatic boy from the film – the splendidly named Henri Puff – turns up again, as a late teenager, in a leading role of "**La Maison des Bois**".

[no listing in "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)", "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"]

Winner of the San Giorgio Prize at the 1968 Venice Film Festival. Pialat returned to use the same locale and some of the same non-professional cast for "**PASSE TON BAC D'ABORD**" (79), observing a group of high school pupils. I saw this film some years back, in original French with Dutch subtitles, but too long ago to add any detailed criticism. My impression was that the central character of Francois cut a distinctly unsympathetic figure in the film, his behaviour less a case of "almost gratuitous acts of mischief" (Just William fashion), more wilful acts of spite against the world for his mother's rejection. Pialat seemed to be demonstrating that it requires more than liberal humanitarian instincts to cope with emotional time bombs like Francois, but quite what the solution might be he makes no attempt to say. Not every human knot can be unravelled, but it is a brave film that concedes even this much.

See subject index under **AUTOBIOGRAPHY / VIDEO DIARIES, DIRECTORS, ORPHANS / ADOPTION / CHILDREN'S HOMES** and **OSCAR WINNERS / AWARD WINNERS**.