

Farrebique ou Les Quatre Saisons

("Farrebique, or The Four Seasons")

France quasi-documentary : 1946 : dir. Georges Rouquier : L'Ecran Français : 85 min
 prod: : scr: Georges Rouquier : dir.ph.: André Dantan

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	∞	M	⌘	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
2496b	3.5	7	4	1,145	3	-	-	-	-	No	unseen



Source for all stills: Collins Film Book c1948

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"A farming family of three generations live on Farrebique farm where it's often a hard struggle for existence, but where also there's a manifest joy and a bond with tradition which persists, far from the agitations and complications of city life. Even so there are some family members who would like to look elsewhere, and get to know an easier, if more complex, way of life. Played by amateurs, this pseudo-documentary made for a moving and

sobre film from a director who never had the chance to work in the same style again, so his special qualities came only sporadically to expression in his later work. ***1/2 " ¹

Halliwel's Film Guide review:

¹ A clumsy translation but my own

“Problems of a peasant family in central

France. Superbly-filmed semi-documen-



tary, acted by a real family. dir.ph: André Dantan ** ”

“Definitely a film for posterity” – MFB

Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide review:

“The life of a peasant family in a remote area of South-West France from December 1944 to November 1945, including the struggles in work, the harvesting, an engagement, a death, and baking of bread. Rouquier’s first feature was made in his native Massif Central, using a family known to him. The personal involvement, the affectionate and detailed rendering of the people’s lives and the lyricism of the cutting and camerawork make it one of the finest of documentaries. The stunning time-lapse photography on the coming of spring was actually shot by Daniel Sarrade and Maurice Delille in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. Music by Henri Sauguët.”

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

“A classic documentary about a farming family living in a remote part of the Massif Central. It follows their activities over the period of a year – the coming of electricity, harvesting, an engagement, a death, the

children’s walk to school, breadmaking – and whether small or important they are beautifully shown. *** ”

Movies on TV (1987) review:

“Enthralling, intimate documentary look at the life of a provincial French farming family, culled from a year of living with and photographing three generations, and the sprawling acreage, vineyards, livestock that comprise the farm, “Farrebique”. Sensitive view of nature and traditions. ***”

A Picture Guide to the Cinema note:

“ “**FARREBIQUE**”, Georges Rouquier’s pastoral documentary of a peasant family in central France.”

Collins’ Film Book – c1948 – synopsis:

“This is the story of a simple French peasant family throughout the four seasons of the year. Farrebique was the name of a small and not very fat farm in the Rouergue district which forms part of the Aveyron Department right in the centre of France. Its soil was so poor that it would not have been profitable to employ outside labour to work it, so all the labour was

done by members of the family. The law of the district was that the farm was passed from the father to his eldest son. The land was his, but all his brothers and sisters worked on it, and he paid them a little money each.

It was a great day for Roch, the eldest son, when Grandfather, the legal owner of Farrebique, came to the decision that he was too old to carry on working and handed over the reins to Roch. Roch was an ambitious and sharp-witted peasant, but his ideas of farming were rather out-of-date. Henri, the youngest son, wanted to introduce more modern methods into Farrebique, but he found it difficult to persuade Roch to alter his antiquated notions.

The farm was over a hundred years old. Originally, it had been a tiny building which housed both people and animals, separated from each other only by a mud wall. As the farm had prospered, other buildings had been built on to the original one, and Farrebique had become quite a sizable place, big enough to house all the owner's sons and their wives and their children.

Now, however, the foundations of the oldest part of the farmhouse were beginning to show signs of weakening. Obviously they would have to be repaired, particularly as another baby had been born to start yet another generation and still more living room would be needed. Roch hated the idea of spending even a sou of his hard-earned money on improvements, but his wife Berthe was both far-seeing and dominating. When Henri put forward his bold new ideas, she backed him up, and Roch was at length persuaded that changes must be made – and some money spent.

The four seasons went their slow way. Grandmother sat eternally at her sewing machine, and Grandfather now spent most of the day by the fire. But Farrebique was being patched up to last at least another century, and there were new-born babies in their cradles who would one day grow up to take the place of Grandfather and Roch."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "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"]



The expression "nostalgie de la boue" comes to mind. Rustic poverty may look enchanting from a comfortable distance, and may be blissfully free of the curses of modern city life, but we shouldn't make a pastoral idyll of other people's privations, in my view. "PADRE PADRONE" would make a salutary corrective to any romanticism in this film.

Not a word about the Common Agricultural Policy – I promise. But the year seems particularly significant – while this sleepy documentary footage was being shot, events of global consequence were playing out just across the border, and the film's evocation of simple rustic continuity should be seen against the context of the wholesale devastation of rural communities across Europe in the few preceding years. Well done or not, it was clearly nostalgia that was being marketed here, or a healing sense of continuity for a France just emerging from Nazi occupation.

See subject index under **DOCUMENTARIES** and **FARMS & FARMING**, and perhaps in particular see the four (!) filmed versions of "**POIL DE CAROTTE**", the two Belgian productions of "**DE WITTE VAN SICHEM**", or the two film versions of "**PELLE EROBREREN**". The nearest equivalent in English cinema would probably be the lyrical documentaries of Robert Flaherty – "**MAN OF ARAN**" (34) in particular, but "**BROTHER TO THE OX**" was a fine English TV film about the (decidedly un-lyrical) life of the boy agricultural labourer.