



RE-RELEASES

The Wicker Man

The Wicker Man

Director: Robin Hardy

©: British Lion Film Corporation

Presented by: British Lion Film Corporation

Producer: Peter Snell

Unit Manager: Mike Gowans

Production Manager: Ted Morley

Location Manager: Jilda Smith

Production Secretary: Beryl Harvey

Assistant Director: Jake Wright

Continuity: Sue Merry

Casting Director: Maggie Cartier

Screenplay by: Anthony Shaffer

Director of Photography: Harry Waxman

2nd Unit Photography: Peter Allwork

Camera Operator: Jimmy Devis

Focus: Mike Drew

Stills: John Brown

Film Editor: Eric Boyd-Perkins

Assistant Editor: Denis Whitehouse

Art Director: Seamus Flannery

Costume Design: Sue Yelland

Wardrobe Supervisor: Masada Wilmot

Make-up: Billy Partleton

Hairdresser: Jan Dorman

Music Composed by: Paul Giovanni

Music Performed by: Magnet

'Corn Figs' sung by: Paul Giovanni

Associate Musical Director: Gary Carpenter

Choreographer: Stewart Hopps

Sound: Robin Gregory, Bob Jones

Sound Editor: Vernon Messenger

Publicity: Frank Law

Studio: Shepperton Studios

uncredited

Production Accountant: Ernest Shepherd

Based on the novel *Ritual* by: David Pinner

2nd Assistant Director: Brian Cook

Cast:

Edward Woodward (*Sergeant Neil Howie*)

Britt Ekland (*Willow MacGregor*)

Diane Cilento (*Miss Rose*)

Ingrid Pitt (*librarian*)

Christopher Lee (*Lord Summerisle*)

Roy Boyd (*Broome*)

Lesley Mackie (*Daisy*)

Walter Carr (*school master*)

Irene Sunters (*Mrs May Morrison*)

Lindsay Kemp (*Alder MacGregor*)

Ian Campbell (*Oak*)

Kevin Collins (*old fisherman*)

Aubrey Morris (*old gardener/gravedigger*)

Russell Waters (*harbour master*)

Donald Eccles (*T.H. Lennox*)

Geraldine Cowper (*Rowan Morrison*)

Leslie Blackater (*hairdresser*)

Peter Brewis, Michael Cole, Ian Cutler,

Bernard Murray, Andrew Tompkins (*musicians*)

Barbara Ann Brown (*woman with baby*)

Juliette Cadzow (*villager on Summerisle*)

Ross Campbell (*communicant*)

Penny Cluer (*Gillie*)

Myra Forsyth (*Mrs Grimmond*)

John Hallam (*Police Constable Hugh McTaggart*)

Alison Hughes (*fiancée to Howie*)

Charles Kearney (*butcher*)

Fiona Kennedy (*Holly*)

John MacGregor (*baker*)

Jimmy MacKenzie (*briar*)

Jennifer Martin (*Myrtle Morrison*)

Helen Norman, Elizabeth Sinclair

(*villagers on Summerisle*)

Lorraine Peters (*girl on grave*)

We celebrate the 50th anniversary of this chilling British horror, which only gets better with age. When a schoolgirl is reported missing, Police Sergeant Neil Howie flies to the Hebridean island of Summerisle to investigate. This creates a stir among the islanders, who claim the officer is on a fool's errand because the girl never existed. Although all evidence points to a wasted trip, Howie's instincts lead him to persevere, despite his distaste for the pagan leanings of the locals. It's only then that he discovers the horrible truth.

Some five decades after its first release, *The Wicker Man* continues to thrill. Its plausibility is what makes the film so unsettling, while its eccentricities and folklore roots provide a chilling delight.

Justin Johnson, Lead Programmer, bfi.org.uk

Come, it is time to keep your appointment with Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man*. Forty years old, the film burns brighter than ever across the scarred terrain of British Cinema. Famously championed by *Cinefantastique* stateside, as far back as 1977, as 'the *Citizen Kane* of horror', it took longer to ignite at home, but nowadays regularly ranks high in best film polls, with its star, Christopher Lee, having declared that in it he gave his greatest performance.

Certainly his Lord Summerisle – forever statuesque in natty sports jacket and yellow polo neck atop that Scottish island cliff, arms raised, fingers strangely crooked, hair flying in the wind, in front of the flaming you-know-what – has become familiar enough that he might conceivably challenge The Count as the part for which Lee is best remembered. Which doubtless pleases him no end.

Despite all this, back in the dark days of the British film industry of the early 1970s, *The Wicker Man*, unloved and unwanted, was condemned by the very company that released it as 'hellishly difficult to market.' Great chunks were chopped to make it a supporting feature, ignominiously shoved out on the bottom end of a double bill with *Don't Look Now*.

It wouldn't have been surprising if – like many other difficult-to-label British features that litter that awkward decade – it had quietly faded into obscurity; but it didn't. A legend grew around *The Wicker Man*, one perhaps more complex than the ingenious narrative at its heart. Its cause was taken up by a passionate band of fiercely dedicated aficionados, initially in the USA, then back in Blighty, all proudly wielding its undeserved neglect like a banner. Cut into more versions than anyone can keep track of, the film has a production history that's shrouded in mystery and confusion. Those in the know still argue over the running times and respective merits of the 'short', 'medium' and 'long' *Wicker Man*. It became the text-book 'cult' movie, with word of its charms spread from fan to fan, in an analogue age, via whispered rumour and fanzines, back when your only chance of catching a forgotten film was if it turned up on telly late one night. And it was a 1988 BBC screening, with which Alex Cox launched his cult cinema series *Moviedrome*, that finally brought *The Wicker Man* home. They were supposed to be showing the 'long' version for the very first time; but instead they showed the 'medium'. It was all very mysterious. The flames of fascination were fanned once more.

Now, four decades since release, reappraised, scrutinised, analysed, deconstructed and obsessed over, it is the subject of painstakingly researched

Tony Roper (*postman*)
John Sharp (*Dr Ewan*)
Ian Wilson (*communicant*)
Richard Wren (*Ash Buchanan*)
John Young (*fishmonger*)
uncredited
Annie Ross (*dubbed Britt Ekland*)
Robin Hardy (*minister*)
UK 1973©
95 mins

A StudioCanal release

RE-RELEASES

The Wicker Man

Continues from Fri 30 Jun

NEW RELEASES

Name Me Lawand

From Fri 7 Jul; Fri 7 Jul 18:20 + intro & Q&A with
director Edward Lovelace

Barbie

From Fri 21 Jul

Talk to Me

From Fri 28 Jul

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including
priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI
Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**,
the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine.
Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK
only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk



BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you
can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on
demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British
and independent titles, films are available to watch
in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free
to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with
three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library,
regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque
with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse
special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new
space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside
views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious
seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for
cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-
cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun
goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme
updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account
at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

books and worthy academic treatises, and it features on the media studies 'A'
level syllabus. You can buy the soundtrack – an essential purchase – or the
Hollywood remake featuring Nicolas Cage in a bear suit, which is possibly not
so essential. With the remastered 'medium' version about to see British release
for the first time, *The Wicker Man* teeters on the borders of the mainstream;
perhaps elevation to the canon of cinematic greatness waits just around the
corner. But in some ways that might spoil the fun.

The film grew out of Hardy's friendship with Anthony Shaffer (author of *Sleuth*,
screenwriter of *Frenzy*). Having worked together as advertising agency Hardy-
Shaffer (Shaffer produced; Hardy directed), and sharing a dry, understated
sense of humour, they combined forces to come up with the idea.

It's quite a story. *The Wicker Man* sees staunchly Christian police sergeant
Howie (Edward Woodward) fly to Summerisle, a remote Scottish island, to
investigate the disappearance of young Rowan Morrison. Suspicions aroused
by locals' claims that there is no such girl, Howie is led a merry dance by a
bizarre assortment of apparently friendly island folk as he attempts to locate
her. He is disgusted by the islanders' overt sexuality – the youngsters enjoy
mass alfresco lovemaking on the village green – and horrified by their pagan
practices...

The film was evocatively shot (by Harry Waxman) on location in Scotland – one
contemporary reviewer meant it as criticism when he described the 'folk
custom travelogue' look, but this is precisely why it rings so true. The folk
customs, tightly storyboarded by ex art director Hardy and derived from his
study of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, seem very authentic. Some critics have
complained that they're not that authentic – the sword-dancing comes in for
particular tut-tutting – but if this is not how the customs were carried out, it is
surely how they should have been. Everything is there, from corn dollies and
choreographed maypole dances to the more ludicrous extremes of toads
thrust into little girls' mouths as a cure for sore throats and the gleeful hanging
of 'navel strings' above the graves of the recently deceased.

Forty years on, *The Wicker Man* still stands alone. Resistant to genre labels, of
its time but ahead of its time, it also harks to a world outside time – a
mysterious, tantalising world of indistinct folk memory, a distant Albion that lies
within us all. Technological advances have not diminished our ache for
something less artificial; and, as we plunge ever faster into an uncertain future,
yet reach back and wonder at a shared folk history that remains just out of our
grasp, *The Wicker Man*'s ribald relevance is endlessly refreshed, and its earthy
allure grows stronger.

'It stands apart from time and space,' says Hardy. 'I think it has endured
because it's about part of this country's life, and mythology, and existence.'
While we remain sceptical of modernity and power, and ponder what we might
believe in, but still enjoy a joke and a singsong, *The Wicker Man* will continue to
tower enigmatically above us – whether we gather a good harvest or not.

Vic Pratt, *Sight and Sound*, October 2013