



### The Wicker Man (Final Cut)

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 Rigs' 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*)

## Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

# The Wicker Man (Final Cut)

*The screening on Friday 4 July will be introduced by Alex Cox and Nick Freand Jones*

'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.' From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

**Alex Cox:** *The Wicker Man* was written by Anthony Shaffer, the author of *Sleuth*. *Cinefantastique* called it, rather optimistically, the *Citizen Kane* of horror films. Its British director was Robin Hardy, who formerly specialised in television commercials. It has a cult reputation despite the fact that most of those who rate it very highly have not seen the original version.

It was initially 102 minutes long, but the owners of the film decided that it would be much better if they cut 15 minutes and put it out as the second half of a double bill. (This was back in the days when you used to get two films for the price of one.) So they cut it down to 87 minutes and, in 1973, released it on a double bill with Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*. As the years went by and the film's cult reputation grew, attempts were made to restore the missing portions, but most of the original negative had gone missing. Apparently it had ended up in the pylons that support the M4 motorway.

The 'original version' has now been partly restored for television. However, there's one principal scene still missing, an early sequence in which Edward Woodward, who plays a Scottish police officer, is introduced, and we're told he's engaged to be married and has not yet 'known a woman'. This is worth bearing in mind as you enjoy the pagan delights of *The Wicker Man*, which include Lindsay Kemp, the mime artist, Christopher Lee without his cape, and Britt Ekland dubbed in Scottish.

Alex Cox's original introduction for *Moviedrome*. Also published in *Moviedrome: The Guide* (BBC, 1990). With thanks to [moviedromer.tumblr.com](http://moviedromer.tumblr.com)

Come, it is time to keep your appointment with Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man*. 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.

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*.

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  
Digital 4K

Moviedrome transmission date: 8 May 1988

#### With thanks to

Bob Cummins and Sharon Maitland

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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 textbook '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, reappraised, scrutinised, analysed, deconstructed and obsessed over, it is the subject of painstakingly researched 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 on 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 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.

*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