Since it is only a few months since we ran our first Alastair Sim program, I hardly need to repeat the notes from that occasion outlining Sim's position as Britain's leading comic-actor player, and also as a fine dramatic actor. I will preface these notes however by saying that I have deliberately curtailed the number of films represented in the compilation of Sim's career. With so many regulars unable to get in because of the transit strike, it seemed a pity to have them lose this material. So what I have done is to use fewer but longer excerpts, and then on another occasion in the Fall, when we'll be doing a further Sim program, repeat the process--covering the same years, but via different films.

COMPIILATION (in order of production, and also in order of screening):

**RIVERSIDE MURDER** (1935) Sim's very first film, a grade "B" thriller directed by veteran Albert Parker, with Sim in a soon-to-be-familiar role as a none-too-bright assistant to a Scotland Yard man.

**A FINE HASSLE ANYONE ELSE?** (1935) Sim's third film, and a rather pleasing and offbeat musical comedy that we plan to run complete eventually. Although this closing episode is mainly a showcase for a song from stars Planagan and Allen, it does show that--even that early in his movie career--Sim was a master at scene-stealing facial pantomime.

**INSPECTOR HORNEIGH ON HOLIDAY** (1939) A good Launder and Gilliat script, and one of a series of highly popular comedy thrillers that originated with a radio series. Sim's backup to star Gordon Parker in these films did much to establish his growing reputation.

**COTTAGE TO LET** (1941) Perhaps the first film to really give Sim his head in mixing serious commercial landscapes with sprawl comedy. An Anthony Asquith-directed wartime thriller, drawing on both Hitchcock and Lang traditions, with Sim--at one point--manqueering as a German secret agent.

**HER AND CRY** (1947) First of the traditional Ealing comedies, with Sim in a relatively minor but tremendously effective role. This excerpt can be considered something of a trailer, since we're playing the whole film on July 23.

**LADY GODIVA RIDES AGAIN** (1951) Although we did run the film not too many seasons back, Sim's one sequence in it as an impoverished film producer--a droll, witty, rather sad--is too good not to repeat, especially as the sequence was excised from the cut U.S. release print.

**THE GREEN MAN** (1956) Another Launder and Gilliat frolic, this time with Sim as a rather unlikely but very funny professional assassin.

**SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS** (1960) Although not exactly Sim's farewell to the screen--there were three more films (and many stage appearances) before his death in 1976--this was the last starring vehicle for Sim, and an extremely funny one. These latter two films are overdue for revival, and we plan to team them up in the near future.

-- 10 Minute Intermission --

**POLY TO BE WISE** (London Films-British Lion, 1952) A Launder-Gilliat Production, directed by Frank Lauder; written by Lauder and Johnighton, based on James Bridie's play "It Depends What You Mean"; Camera, Jack Hildyard; Music, Temple Abady; 85 min.

With: Alastair Sim (Captain Paris); Roland Culver (George Prout); Elizabeth Allan (Angela Prout); Martita Hunt (Lady Dodd); Collin Gordon (Professor Hutch); Miles Malleson (Dr. Maldon); Edward Chapman (Joseph Byres, M.P.); Janet Brown (Jasie Killigrew); Peter Marten (Walter); Robin Bailey (Corporal); George Cole (Private).

"Folly To Be Wise" is undoubtedly the definitive Sim role, if not his funniest film. It was written for him specifically by James Bridie as a stage vehicle, and then transferred bodily to the screen with little attempt to open it up in any way. It is, in fact, a talk-fest, hung on a loose single situation rather than a plot, and for full appreciation one needs to approach it knowing that no one's going to shift gears or really go anywhere. But it gives Sim magnificent opportunities to run through his entire gamut of facial and vocal pantomime. Not only is he very funny, but in addition one may even regard his performance as a masterpiece of acting too, since he is dead on target in recreating the kind of bumbling, well-meaning but totally ineffectual cleric that we were all bored by and felt mildly sorry for in our own Army days. (Perhaps I should limit that remark to the British army--someday the image of the U.S. Army padre runs more to Karl Malden!)

Incidentally, the play's original title is "It Depends What You Mean" was a deliberate and none-too-subtle dig (or kick) at one Professor Joad, a somewhat pompous British intellectual who was a member of the original Brains Trust that so delighted British wartime radio audiences. (Popular were they that they even made a feature film of nothing but questions and answers). The catchphrase was Joad's launching pad to intellectual analysis of questions IOMI before he got around to answering them, and radio audiences, while respecting him, were always delighted on those occasions when British decorum collapsed and other more human members of the Brains Trust deflated him. Joseph's orisinal voice and beard, are all beautifully satirized by Collin Gordon in this film, and there is admirable support from a fine troupe of supporting players, including the indomitable Martita Hunt, Britain's own Margaret Dumont. But it's Sim's show all the way, and it's a sheer delight to sit back and watch him get the very most out of his dialogue, and on many occasions, by his sheer presence, extract fun from lines and situations which might otherwise run the risk of being as boring as the very situations they seek to satirize.

William K. Everson

Program finishes approx. 10:20 (depending on length of compilation, still in the editing stage)

Please Note: I will be away for the remaining two programs in the series, so these will start promptly at 7:30 without introduction. Summer schedule will be available at the last screening.