

The film is thus clearly meant to be more evocative than informational or biographical, and at that it succeeds fairly well; what one comes away with above all is a strong impression of what gay art looked like when, confronted with the AIDS crisis, it was galvanized into looking simultaneously at the past and into the future. *Looking for Langston* occasionally falls into that perennial pitfall of non-narrative cinema, coming across as a somewhat random hodgepodge of images and sounds. But it ultimately stands as an important work of art worth revisiting for its anthropological, aesthetic and political value.

Screens 8 p.m. April 19 at Q Center with *Tongues Untied*, an acclaimed account of black gay life. Presented in conjunction with Unity Project of Oregon as part of the Portland Lesbian & Gay Film Festival's Queer Film School. **B**

—Christopher McQuain

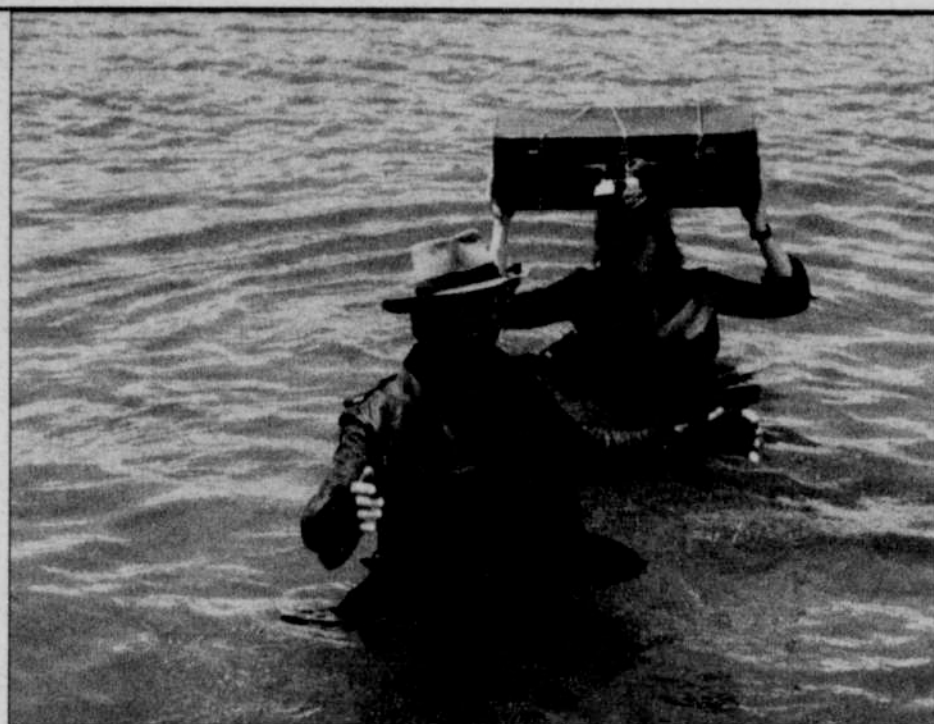
Nim's Island

Based on the book by Wendy Orr and Kerry Millard, this witty and funny family film, set in breathtaking surroundings around Australia, tells the story of a young girl (Abigail Breslin) who lives with her father (Gerard Butler) on a remote island. Nim spends her days with her only friends—a sea lion, an iguana and a sea turtle—and reading the books of Alex Rover, the world's greatest adventurer. When her father goes missing at sea, she contacts the author to help her find him. Little does she know that Alex Rover is an agoraphobic woman (Jodie Foster) who never leaves the house. *Nim's Island* is predictable and might be a little boring for older teens, but the storytelling is good. **B**

—YPB

Rope

Based loosely on the infamous Leopold and Loeb gay murder case of the 1920s, Alfred Hitchcock's 1948 classic *Rope* features two brilliant but criminally minded queens, Brandon (John Dall)



Jodie Foster plays a fish out of water in the family film *Nim's Island*.

"superman" theory—that intellectual elites can do anything they please, including murder, because they're so, uh, smart. David is the unfortunate guinea pig in their plan to test the theory.

The atmosphere isn't exactly party-hearty. For one thing, Phillip seems to be a nervous wreck. And Brandon keeps making oblique references to the fact that David hasn't arrived yet. Brandon also can't resist "little touches," as he calls them, to add to the *frisson* of killing: serving dinner to David's friends and family on his de facto coffin; giving David's father some rare books tied up with the rope that killed the boy; and regaling the appalled guests with his murder theories. The arrival of the boys' former teacher, Rupert (James Stewart), who spouts the same theories but more as a kind of intellectual game, ratchets up the tension to the boiling point.

Rope is most famous as Hitchcock's experiment in shooting a film almost in real time, with only 10 shots in the whole thing. The actors perform with panache under what must have been a grueling shoot—no mistakes allowed! Another fascinating aspect of *Rope* is that screenwriter Arthur Laurents and the two leads (Dall and Granger) were queer in real life, giving a tasty homoerotic undertone to the affair. While the film doesn't directly state that Brandon and Phillip are in a gay relationship, all the signs are there: the nervous interplay, bitchy repartee, looking ready to kiss half the time. Brandon even lights a cigarette in a mocking post-coital moment after the murder. Gay activists have long protested cinematic portrayals of homicidal queens. How did they miss this one? Maybe because, unlike the usual sleazy targets of their wrath, *Rope* is actually an excellent, sometimes brilliant film.

Screens 8 p.m. April 20 at The Press Club. **A**

—Gary Morris

The Visitor

Writer/director Thomas McCarthy (*The Station Agent*) avoids the dreaded "sophomore slump" with this touching drama about a jaded, widowed professor who befriends a young immigrant couple—a Syrian drummer and his Senegalese girlfriend—struggling to stay in the United States. Familiar character actor Richard Jenkins (*Flirting with Disaster*,

Six Feet Under) finally emerges from his reliable supporting status to create the enlightened face of a person who comes to realize that immigrants are not the enemy in post-9/11 America. **A**

—Jim Radosta



Two brilliant but criminally minded queens strangle their friend in Alfred Hitchcock's 1948 classic *Rope*.

and Phillip (Farley Granger), who throw a party like no other: The unsuspected centerpiece is the dead body of their friend David, whom they've just strangled and hid in a chest. Like Leopold and Loeb, our heroes subscribe to Nietzsche's

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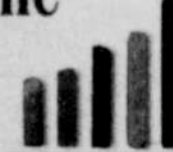
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