

Film Notes

By Sal Creber

Rope

1948 | 83mins

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Starring: John Dall, Farley Granger, Dick Hogan

In *Rope*, the audience is spared no discomfort. Based on the 1929 play by Patrick Hamilton, which was inspired in part by the deeply unpleasant 1924 'Leopold and Loeb Case' where two upper-class students, convinced that they were morally superior to those around them, murdered a 14-year-old boy. *Rope* is an unflinching, uncomfortable portrayal of classist arrogance and sadism.

We are first introduced to David Kentley (Dick Hogan) on the way to a dinner party hosted by two of his former prep-school classmates, the calculating Brandon (John Dall) and the sensitive Phillip (Farley Granger). What occurs next leads to a long, twisting narrative set entirely in Brandon and Phillip's shared apartment, as they host a dinner party for David's friends. *Rope* is a masterpiece of complex camerawork and nerve-wrackingly tense writing and acting.

When Rupert Cadell (James Stewart) – Brandon, Phillip, and David's former prep-school housemaster – arrives things become even more fraught. Phillip begins crumbling under the pressure that he perceives to be coming from a range of fairly neutral questions, Brandon's ego becomes further inflated and he continues to justify his actions by discussions the three of them have had previously about Nietzsche's 'ubermensch' ('superhuman'), and Rupert's suspicion builds exponentially, until he is certain his two former pupils have done something unspeakable.

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Not only is *Rope* a masterfully taut piece of film, it is also marked by a decades long discussion on the alleged queerness of Brandon and Phillip. The characters' mannerisms, enunciation, and living situation all read as incredibly, openly queer, particularly given the film's time period.

While the film's writer, Arthur Laurents, was gay, and Farley Granger bisexual (*Include Me Out* by Farley Granger, 2007), John Dall was also allegedly gay (*Bad Boys: The Actors of Film Noir* by Karen Burroughs Hannsberry, 2003). In the iconic 1995 documentary, *The Celluloid Closet*, Laurents states 'I don't think the censors at that time realized this was about gay people. They didn't have a clue what was and what wasn't, that's how it got by.'

'Rope feels "live", which means that at any minute one of the actors could do something unexpected, such as fluff their lines, or heaven forbid, open the trunk'

- The Guardian

Excellent

Fair

Poor



What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

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Did You Know?

- *Rope* was edited so it appeared to have only been shot in four long, continuous takes.
- This was Alfred Hitchcock’s first film shot in colour.
- The film was banned in several American cities due to the implied gay relationship between Phillip (Farley Granger) and Brandon (John Dall).

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A successful crime-fiction author invites his wife’s lover to his house, and then tries to hide his murder.



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Also based around the ‘Leopold and Leob’ case, stars Ryan Gosling attempting to implicate a student for his ‘perfect crime’.

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