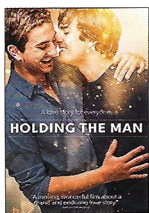
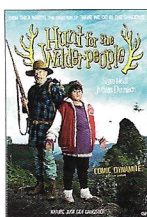


both Conigrave and his longtime lover John Caleo died of AIDS, this heartfelt but uneven adaptation from director Neil Armfield haphazardly jumps through the nearly two decades of their relationship. The story begins with the boys finding one another as classmates in a Melbourne Jesuit high school, and quickly becoming inseparable despite attempts by their families to keep them apart. Moving to Sydney to continue their studies—Tim (Ryan Corr) at a prestigious dramatic academy, John (Craig Stott) in a chiropractic school—the pair remain a couple, despite John's discomfort with Tim's more extrovert lifestyle. Ultimately, both are diagnosed as HIV-positive, and Tim nurses John through his final days before repairing to an island off the Italian coast to write his book. One can't help but be moved by the basic narrative, which is essentially a gay version of *Love Story* that is made more powerful by its foundation in fact. Sequences highlighting the homophobia of the time resonate, and the hospital scenes here skirt the obvious dangers of mawkishness. But Corr and Stott are simply too old to be convincing as 16-year-old boys in the long 1976 section of the film, the dialogue is often stilted, and even veterans like Guy Pearce and Anthony LaPaglia (as the boys' fathers) and Gregory Rush (as Tim's snide drama teacher) have difficulty bringing much nuance to their characters. Although it could have been better, this powerful true-life narrative is—despite flaws—a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)



Hunt for the Wilderpeople ★★★★★
 Sony, 101 min., PG-13, DVD: \$19.99, Sept. 27

Ricky Baker (Julian Dennison) is a chubby 13-year-old terror who is deposited at a remote farm in the New Zealand bush by a cynical social worker as a last chance of avoiding juvenile detention. Warmly received by chirpily voluble Bella (Rima Te Wiata), but with much less enthusiasm by her grumpy husband Hector (Sam Neill), the sullen boy tries to run away and gets nowhere, but Bella's insistent cajoling ultimately wins him over. When Bella's sudden death sends Ricky fleeing into the wild, Hector follows, and the pair bond while being hunted by scores of police, soldiers, and vigilantes who believe that Hector has kidnapped the kid. Director Taika Waitiki's *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* might initially sound like an earnest afterschool special, but it's really a quirky and funny delight, featuring outrageous scenes involving strange folks whom Ricky and Hector bump into during their adventures. Charming off-kilter, this family movie is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



I, Anna ★★
 KimStim, 93 min., not rated, DVD: \$29.99

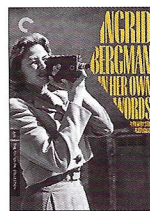
Gabriel Byrne and Charlotte Rampling star in this overextended and rather slight mystery thriller about a single woman named Anna (Rampling), who is linked to the bludgeoning death of a man who took her home from a party. Byrne plays Bernie, a London cop on the case who is drawn to Anna, growing protective even as he tries to sort out the facts. Writer-director Branaby Southcombe (Rampling's real-life son) is guilty of stretching the thin plot to the breaking point. But he does have some fun along the way, turning a frog-green umbrella—repeatedly left in different places by the distracted Anna—into a clue, and getting some Lady Macbeth mileage out of Anna's itchy forearm. Short on story, *I, Anna* largely serves as a vehicle for Rampling's smart performance. An optional purchase. (T. Keogh)



Ingrid Bergman: In Her Own Words ★★

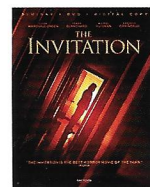
Criterion, 114 min., in Swedish, Italian, English & French w/ English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95, Blu-ray: \$39.95

Stig Björkman's affectionate documentary profile of Ingrid Bergman combines Bergman's diary entries and letters (read in voiceover by Oscar-winning actress Alicia Vikander) with remembrances from her daughter Isabella Rossellini and other confidants, including actress and director Liv Ullmann. The results play like a rejoinder to those depressing Hollywood-chews-up-actress-and-spits-her-out stories. Before she left Sweden for America, Bergman had already lost her parents and siblings, which might have contributed to her independent spirit. But while she thrived on screen in classics like *Casablanca*, the puritanical press of the 1940s condemned her affair with Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini (she also had affairs with Robert Capa and Victor Fleming). But aside from those scandals, there is no dirt here. Viewers will learn that Bergman loved working with Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, and Alfred Hitchcock. She also wrote heartfelt letters to directors with whom she wanted to work, such as Ingmar Bergman, who reignited her career with a role in *Interiors*. All told, Bergman had three husbands, four children, and lived in five countries. She won three Oscars, but also received scathing reviews for her more experimental work. In the end, she was a remarkable woman who had no regrets. As she says, "I had a lion inside me that wouldn't keep quiet." Recommended. (K. Fennessy)



The Invitation ★★
 DraftHouse, 100 min., not rated, Blu-ray/DVD Combo: \$34.99

Filmmaker Karyn Kusama uses a confined space to genuinely creepy effect in this slow-burning psychological thriller. *The Invitation* begins with young couple Will (Logan Marshall-Green) and Kira (Emayatzy Corinealdi) driving to a dinner party at the Hollywood Hills home that Will used to share with his ex-wife Eden (Tammy Blanchard), who is newly remarried to David (Michiel Huisman). Will, Kira, and the remaining guests (some old friends, others strangers) are introduced by their hosts—and a young woman living with them—to a grief-management program called "The Invitation" via a film that shows a woman being euthanized. The death theme escalates as Will is haunted by memories of his young son, who was killed in an accident for which he still blames himself, and another guest admits to being responsible for his wife's death. Gradually, however, Will becomes convinced that Eden, David, and a few others are engaged in some sinister plot. Kusama cleverly ratchets up the suspense, making good use of the isolated locale to incrementally build tension. While the final act is both violent and rather implausible, many viewers will enjoy the clever twist ending. Recommended. (F. Swietek)



Jia Zhangke, A Guy from Fenyang ★★

Kino Lorber, 98 min., in Mandarin w/English subtitles, not rated, DVD: \$29.95

Brazilian director Walter Salles's portrait of maverick Chinese filmmaker Jia Zhangke incorporates Jia's signature theme—concerning the heady changes occurring in his country—through the simple but clever expedient of following Jia around his hometown (and other locales) as he talks about the great alterations since he last visited. On these jaunts, Jia is sometimes accompanied by colleagues who add their own recollections, and he occasionally bumps into acquaintances with whom he chats about the old days. This unusual way of providing a selective but informative biographical sketch—complemented by short conversations with Jia's mother and sister (often about Jia's fondly remembered late father)—dovetails with an introduction to Jia's highly personal films. Jia comes across as an affable, modest man from an ostensibly commonplace background, raised by parents who differed from others in their appreciation of literature beyond the Maoist propaganda of the time. The tone in which Jia speaks about the government's refusal to permit his films—widely admired abroad—to be shown in Chinese theatres, is one of melancholic regret rather than anger.

