



For Booking:
Kristen Fitzpatrick, Women Make Movies
 212.925.0606, x312 / kf@wmm.com



Orchids
My Intersex Adventure

Synopsis



Gen X filmmaker Phoebe Hart always knew she was different growing up – but she didn't know why. This award-winning documentary traces Phoebe's voyage of self-discovery as an intersex person, a group of conditions formerly termed hermaphroditism. Learning only in her teens that she was born with 46XY (male) chromosomes, Hart now seeks to understand her own story and the stories of others affected by this complex and often shameful syndrome.

With help from sister Bonnie (also born with the same condition) and support from partner James, Hart drives across Australia, interviewing individuals whose struggles and victories mirror and differ from her own. Some advocate systemic change ending shame and controversial genital surgeries, while others debate coming out or staying closeted with a stigmatized secret. Questioning rigidly defined constructs of gender, sexuality, and normality, often with lively good humor, ORCHIDS is the first film to look at intersex from a positive perspective. Its engaging portrait of survival, courage and reconciliation will speak to a variety of audiences and spark lively discussion about what it means to be perceived as "different."

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Background production and “making of” notes



The making of ORCHIDS: MY INTERSEX ADVENTURE was an intimate process, which required a great deal of patience and sensitivity. It took six years to complete the film and during that time, there were numerous, intense negotiations with the subjects of the film, regarding their continued involvement.

Director, Phoebe Hart, used digital cameras and a small crew, whom, wherever feasible, consisted of insiders to the intersex community.

“I felt that by having a small, ‘insider’ crew, the ‘talent’ would be more inclined to openly express issues that may have been long shrouded in secrecy and stigma,” Phoebe said.

As principal documenters, sisters Phoebe and Bonnie Hart used a variety of cameras, ranging from semi-professional to domestic VHS camcorders and Super 8. The documentary’s guerrilla look was achieved by blending rich archival family home movies and photographs with contemporary video footage, recorded specifically for the film.

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Director's statement



This is my story. It's a story of how my body became a site of pain, confusion and secrecy for me and for my family. Not because it is diseased or dysfunctional but because society deemed it to be abnormal. I have Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS). I am a woman with 46XY (male) chromosomes. In my life, I have struggled with unwarranted categorisation and medical interference. Now, I actively seek to disrupt this cataloging and meddling with as much honesty and humour as I can muster. It's the reason why I wanted to make this film.

I chose the title, ORCHIDS, as these ornamental flowers are an especially potent symbol for intersex people. The etymology of the word "orchid" derives from the Greek *orkhis*, meaning "testicle". So, I have appropriated these flowers as a resonant visual signifier throughout my documentary.

On a professional and personal level, ORCHIDS presented me with many challenges. At an early stage of research and development, I made a conscious decision the film should be largely autobiographical. This was important for me on a number of levels and represented a huge step in terms of self-confidence and courage. In my early life, my condition was kept a secret from me. I was confused and told to keep quiet about who and what I was. I was subjected to medical scrutiny, surgery and pathology. ORCHIDS has allowed me to reflect on the shame and trauma of my coming-of-age experience, often with humour, and examine why "coming out" continues to be extremely challenging.

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Crew biographies

Phoebe Hart – Director, Producer and Camera

Phoebe Hart is principal of *hartflicker*, an energetic Australian-based video and film production company. Since completing her film studies at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in 1995, Phoebe Hart has worked extensively as a writer, producer and director of factual television and media, including children's program *Totally Wild*, Network Ten's documentary unit, and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *Race Around the World* and *Fly TV*. She co-directed a documentary series on the state of Australian higher education for the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) called *Downunder Grads*, which screened in March 2008. Phoebe also directed and co-wrote the ABC documentary *Roller Derby Dolls* on a group of women who play the rough-and-tumble sport of roller derby, which screened in a primetime slot in September 2008. In 2009 Phoebe was awarded her doctorate from QUT of which *Orchids* was a central element of her studies.

Bonnie Hart – Camera, Super 8 Cinematographer and Co-conspirator

Bonnie applies her skills and creativity in the areas of film production and visual direction across a variety of media platforms. She holds a degree in Film and Television Production from QUT. Her work has been screened Australia-wide on free-to-air and cable television and at arthouse film festivals. Internationally, she has contributed to films screened at Exploding Cinema/Collision Festival (UK), Xpace2000 (Singapore), Hamilton Underground Film Festival (NZ), Lambtree Grove Project (UK), Odense Ser Rodst (Denmark). Bonnie has also toured extensively nationally and internationally as a high-energy avant-garde musician and performance artist, as a part of various noise music bands such as *Unaustralians*, *Sun of the Seventh Sister* and *Knicker Onasis*.

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Credits

Producer & Director	Phoebe Hart
Camera	Bonnie Hart and Phoebe Hart
Super 8 Cinematographer	Bonnie Hart
Editor	Vanessa Milton
Animation	Simon Rippingale
Theme music	Biddy Connor
Composer	Davin Patterson
Sound designers	Tfer Newsome and John Willsteed
Producer consultant	Famarz K-Rahber
Production coordinator	Bronwyn Roy
Featuring	Phoebe Hart
	Bonnie Hart
	James Davidson
	Dennis Hart
	Marie Hart
	Aleyshia Manakahae
	Tony Briffa
	Andie Hider
	Sophie Hart
	Chris Somers
	Fay Davidson
Additional camera	James Davidson
	Naomi Kumé
	Craig Lucas
	Dan Macarthur
	Famarz K-Rahber
Publicity stills	Bronwyn Roy
Production assistants	Kayla Howard
	Naomi Kumé
	Sarah Vertegaal
Animation designers	Simon Rippingale
	Nina Gibbs
Transcription	Angela Hibbard
	Melissa McLeary
Sound mixer	David White at LCR Film Sound
Online	Matt Bennett
Colourist	Warren Eagles
Production accountant	Vickie Gest

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Insurance
Legals
Extra special thanks

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Adventure
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THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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Screen Australia Creative Consultant
Karin Altmann

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For Press Inquiries:
Abby Peck, Women Make Movies
212.925.0606, x306 / apecck@wmm.com

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