

PBS Offers a Tender Look at Conception

TV REVIEW

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Watching "Baby, It's You," the poignant and amusing film that starts a new round of documentaries in that feisty PBS series "P.O.V.," is much more fun than it was, apparently, for Anne Makepeace to make it.

"I'm in my 40s, so it's really hard to get pregnant the fun way," says filmmaker Makepeace when turning her camera on herself and her husband of 10 years, writer Peter Behrens. The film monitors their fluctuating quest for parenthood via reproductive technology when they are unable to conceive the old-fashioned way. The fluidity of "Baby, It's You" contrasts with the frustration and tortuous emotional grind of the fertility process the couple undergoes.

Meanwhile, we meet the Makepeace clan, including the filmmaker's unconventional brothers, one an aspiring polygamist in Utah, the other residing in Appalachia with a herd of goats. And Behrens' older sister is about to become the parent of a sperm-bank baby with her lesbian lover in Montreal.

This intimate style, with Makepeace constantly center stage, inevitably risks coming across as self-absorption. In her hands, however, "Baby, It's You" is both an artful personal account of uniting eggs and sperm—although she might have better explained why she and Behrens rejected adoption and put their eggs in one basket, so to speak—and a tender personal essay on passages.

During the film's course, lives change, a life ends, hope mingles with dejection and at one point a resigned Makepeace prepares to grieve for "this child I'll never have." You'll have to await the end of her story to learn if that pessimism is justified.

■ "*Baby, It's You*" airs on "P.O.V." at 10 tonight on KCET-TV Channel 28. It has been rated TV-PG (may be unsuitable for young children).