

Eccentric Relatives Can Be a Fertile Topic

WHAT'S REALLY EXPENSIVE, gets more expensive as it gets older, and lots of women (men, too) really want them?

A Jeep Cherokee? A Ford Explorer? No, a baby, silly. It may be a boomer thing, but let's face it: For a lot of people, pregnancy is Job. 1.

This makes tomorrow night's season debut of "POV" — public television's annual summer series of independent nonfiction film — about as topical as it's ever been.

Kicking off the season (which will continue Tuesday nights at 10 through September) is "Baby, It's You" by independent filmmaker Anne Makepeace, about her and her husband Peter's journey through the labyrinthian world of sonograms, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, disappointment and exhilaration.

Makepeace was in her late 40s when she decided she wanted to have a child. There were lots of issues involved in why she didn't earlier, some of which are revealed in dramatic fashion in tomorrow's broadcast, some of which are typical of career-oriented people.

"I don't know the answer about why so many people have put off having children," Makepeace said over lunch in Manhattan recently. "I know for me it was a combination of some early trauma, but also the specifics of my family. My mother certainly never gave me the impression that it was fun to have kids. She clearly thought she was trapped and I got that message. It's also something about our generation. We have our work lives going and, especially if you live a freelance life, it's a lot

better if at least one of you has a solid income going."

Both Makepeace and her husband, a writer, were in, let's say, unstable fields, but the rest of their families — who give the film so much of its character — are rather unorthodox in their own lives. And none of them has kids. At the same time, "Baby, It's You" is about people who are almost typically American, precisely because they're so individualistic.

When they first started playing pregnancy roulette, "Peter said, 'Why don't you just get a camera and tell the story about what you've been going through?'" Makepeace said. "Notice the 'you,'" she said, laughing. "He meant all this past stuff as well as what was about to happen and I was thinking, 'No, this isn't what I do.'

"But I started thinking about the cast of characters in my family — my brothers, whom you could never make up, and my very eccentric aunt. I just began to see it as a bigger story. I would never have made it just about Peter and me trying to have a baby or going through fertility treatment. I wouldn't want to make it; I wouldn't want to watch it.

"But what took hold was the larger story, the path of the story, the puritanical background thing in which sex is never talked about and looking at why, among six of us in my generation, there are no kids. Why is that? What are we all doing and why are we doing it? I began to think of it as having a dramatic structure."

"Baby, It's You" — which got its U.S. debut and a warm reception at the Sundance Film Festival this year — certainly has a dramatic structure. And Makepeace plans to be back in feature films, but only after her next work, a

FILM FILE



**John
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documentary on Edward Curtis, the famed photographer of Native Americans from the 1890s to the 1940s.

"I really love how reality is just much more bizarre than I ever, ever, ever could have imagined," she said. "I couldn't have made up the characters in 'Baby, It's You' and I love that about documentary. You have to let go of the control involved in making a dramatic film, where everything is about realizing what you've already written down, and just let things unfold, often in fascinating ways. I found doing it very compelling. Kind of like putting on shoes that fit."

Et Cetera . . .

Continuing the American Museum of the Moving Image's exploration of technology in the movies, "Godzilla: The Digital Effects" will be presented Thursday at 7 p.m. at the McGraw-Hill Auditorium in Manhattan (1221 Avenue of the Americas, 49th Street entrance). Steven Puri, who founded Centropolis Effects on behalf of filmmakers Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, will make the presentation along with some of his colleagues . . . Also from AMMI: in a special addition to its ongoing "Indie New York" series, Steve Buscemi will be on hand at the museum's Queens headquarters (35th Avenue and 36th Street, Astoria; 718-784-4520) on Saturday to introduce the 2 p.m. screening of "Parting Glances," his first big film. It will be followed at 4 by "In the Soup," another Buscemi-powered vehicle . . . "Junk Mail," in which a completely disreputable Norwegian mailman finds love and chaos in Oslo, plays this week at the Cinema Arts Centre, Huntington (516-423-FILM). Like the postal service, "Junk Mail" delivers. ■