

VARIETY

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THE ODDS OF RECOVERY

(DOCU)

A Down Stream Prods. presentation. Produced, directed, edited by Su Friedrich. Camera (color, vid and 16mm), Friedrich; additional camera, Joel Schlemowitz; sound, Juan Zaldivar. Reviewed at MadCat Women's Film Festival, San Francisco, Sept. 23, 2002. Running time: 66 MIN.

By DENNIS HARVEY

Experimental filmmaker Su Friedrich's latest feature takes a sometimes discomfiting but engrossing, good-humored look at her own long history of medical problems. Not as formally adventurous as some of her earlier work, offbeat documentary's relatively straightforward nature could earn it wider play at general-interest fests in addition to the usual cinemathèques and avant-garde showcases.

Still shy of 50, Friedrich has been in and out of operating rooms since 1977 (the year before she began making films), when a 13-pound cyst was removed from her spleen. That was just the first of many seemingly unrelated health woes that have hobbled her professional and personal lives over 25 years.

Both knees, a nipple and several other body parts go under the knife at one point or another, as Friedrich increasingly feels the helpless

prisoner of her own faulty anatomy.

Deftly assembled pic captures the frustration, tedium and petty annoyances of a revolving-door relationship with medical practitioners — helmer isn't afraid to show herself carping at staff in video diary-style office visits — while contrasting these elements with her attempts to find peace elsewhere. Bemused tusslings with t'ai chi, Chinese herbs and other non-Western practices rep one frontier.

But a more important one, perhaps, is the simple observation of domestic routine: Without risking dullness, "Recovery" nicely limns the satisfaction brought by creativity in the kitchen and garden, with latter's seasonal changes providing an overall conceptual frame. Final prognosis for Friedrich is upbeat — she feels in full control of her body for the first time in years — but then again, menopause lies just around the corner.

Nearly one-woman package is confidently assembled, with plenty of hands-on authorial flavor.