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Hide and Seek

Clever and pointed, Su Friedrich's hour-long feature uses an unusual format—half documentary, half fiction—to discuss and explode myths of lesbian childhood. Interviews with a number of smart, confident women put to shame platitudes about the lonely tomboy with an anguished crush on her girlfriend.

Hide and Seek kicks off with a dimpled Scottish woman reminiscing about girlhood Sapphic experiments in which she and her friend would pretend to be Davy Jones and one of his nameless TV girlfriends going away for a dirty weekend. It then segues into footage of lab chimps playing with little girls, while other women respond thoughtfully, dismissively, or enthusiastically to questions about the so-called gay gene and the idea of homosexuals as the lab monkeys of social science.

The women are all interesting, and no two experiences are alike. If one had a crush on a teacher, another never noticed other girls until her late teens; some were tomboys, while others, such as a saucy older woman with a European accent, were dyed-in-the-wool girly girls with dreams of both being a princess and rescuing one. Some confess to erotic reso-

nances from childhood—the smell of Love's Baby Soft or a blue vein on the back of a slim knee; one gorgeous black woman tells of hiding a page from a Vampirella comic in her jewelry box. The memory is strong—she keeps repeating with overjoyed amazement, "She was so beautiful."

Intercut among these reminiscences and mortifyingly unhelpful education films from the past is a story about pretty, hoydenish Lou, a grade-schooler in the early '60s grappling with new feelings. Lou's story is touching, fresh, and free of clichés, although it ends with an indecisive whimper, as if Friedrich and co-writer Cathy Nan Quinlan didn't much care what would happen to her next. Still, *Hide and Seek* displays more honesty, humor, and diversity than a whole season of *Ellen*.

—Arion Berger

At 8:30 p.m. at the American Film Institute Theater. Also screens Wednesday, April 30 at 6:30 p.m. at the American Film Institute Theater. Director Su Friedrich will be at the screenings.