

In Training Since Childhood

Orit Schwartz has made a life in Hollywood.



Filmmaker Orit Schwartz (left) with Stephen Root and Jane Lynch on the set of *The Frank Anderson*

production friends would help out...and *The Frank Anderson* came together, which is amazing.”

The Frank Anderson features an impressive cast, especially for a film by an untested filmmaker. Jane Lynch, Elena Lyons, Richard Riehle, Stephen Root and Romy Rosemont star in the story of a man who loses the battle to get his insurance company to pay to reduce his man-boobs, but wins a hot woman and starts a man-boob craze.

“I was very lucky,” says Schwartz. “Richard Riehle, who plays the man-boob guy, was the first person I approached, because he had to be topless and spend hours in makeup having the boobs put on,” she explains. “When I told him I was doing this short, he immediately said, ‘I’ll do it.’ I said, ‘I haven’t even told you what it’s about,’ and he said, ‘I don’t care. I’ll do it for you.’”

Riehle even helped Schwartz save the boobs after the shoot. “He had to sit for another two hours for the makeup artist to carefully remove them without tearing them up...I owe him one.”

The film showed Schwartz the importance of the friendships she had made during her 15-year career. “Most of the people who worked on *The Frank Anderson* were somehow connected to *NewsRadio*,” she explains. She was an associate producer for the NBC sitcom.

Lynch, who appeared on *NewsRadio* in 1995, plays a doctor in *The Frank Anderson*. She sees two sides to Schwartz. “On the outside, Orit is all ‘Yeah, sure, whatever you want.’ Be not fooled. The inside is tenacious and driving and wickedly cynical. Me likely,” she adds.

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The Frank Anderson has screened at more than 40 festivals and collected numerous awards. “It’s been awesome to sit in the theater and have the audience get it,” she says. “I’m now having festivals asking to screen it, which is wild.”

Schwartz is especially proud of two screenings of the film at GirlBar in West Hollywood. “I grew up in Los Angeles and GirlBar was the first lesbian club I went to, and for it to be screened there was exciting.”

The filmmaker is currently working on the script for a full-length feature. “It’s a lesbian love triangle with a twist, titled *I Love Me*,” she explains. “We did *The Frank Anderson* out of pocket for under \$5,000. This feature is going to cost quite a bit more, so I’m hoping someone will want to finance it.”

Years ago, Schwartz got some advice from Marcy Carsey. “She basically told me that if you think money is what’s going to define you as successful, you’re wrong,” says Schwartz. “I think about that...Success is all about the friendships you make along the way.” — ES ■

VISITING OREGON in 2005, Orit Schwartz heard about the BendFilm Festival and was inspired to make a short film. A year later, that film, *The Frank Anderson*, premiered there. The short comedy may have been the out writer-producer’s first, but she had been in training to be a filmmaker since childhood.

Born in Hollywood, Schwartz spent the first nine years of her life in Israel. As a child, she was taken to the taping of a television show and a career was born. “When I came back to the States, I started going to tapings of *Silver Spoons* every Friday. I just had a fascination with sitcoms.”

After college at Cal State, Northridge, where she received a degree in media management, Schwartz landed a job at the Carsey-Werner Company. “I got very lucky,” she says. “Marcy Carsey is one of my idols, so it was very cool to get that job.” Carsey cofounded Carsey-Werner, an independent production company that was responsible for some of the most successful and innovative sitcoms of the ‘80s and ‘90s, including *Roseanne* and *The Cosby Show*.

Schwartz’s early career included production work on *Roseanne*, *3rd Rock from the Sun*, *That ‘70s Show* and *NewsRadio*—but her first love was always writing. “I took a UCLA extension course in sitcom writing when I finished college because I wanted to write,” she says.

The transition from production to writing, however, was not without its challenges. “I was on *Roseanne* as a production assistant at the time, and one of the writers read the spec script I wrote for the extension course,” she recalls. “He gave me dreadful notes, which is to be expected, but it just crushed me and set me back a little bit.”

The visit to Oregon made Schwartz think about writing again. “I went home thinking about which actors would say yes to me and thinking of which